

Anglican Highway

Generosity



After devastating wildfires, the people of Summerland are grateful for the help they received from first responders, neighbours, the community, and strangers. Nothing can completely replace what they have lost. But they will always remember those who ran to their help. Photographs from St. Stephen's, Anglican Church, Summerland, Facebook page.

and Gratitude in Summerland

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The Right Reverend
Dr Lynne McNaughton

Rituals of Gratitude



Etty Hillesum, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Margaret Visser



What are your rituals of gratitude? How do you embed thanksgiving into your prayer life? How do you stay quiet enough to become aware of the abundance around you, of the astounding gift of life, what the Jewish mystic Abraham Joshua Heschel calls “the sublime wonder of being” which calls us to “Radical Amazement”? How do you pay attention in a way that nurtures thanksgiving as a natural and essential part of your ongoing conversation with God?

One of the most insightful books I have read on gratitude is “The Gift of Thanks: The Roots and Rituals of Gratitude.” Canadian classicist Margaret Visser, a social anthropologist, looks at the rituals of gratitude across centuries, cultures and religions. (You may remember her as a frequent contributor on CBC radio in the 80s and 90s, and the Massey Lecturer 2002)

She explores in depth what the Christian faith has contributed to the concept of gratitude, the idea of grace, “the self-communication of God to human beings; their experience of God.” Grace is a gift, “unexpected – often over and above what was previously thought possible – and unmerited.” (page 376) Because grace is spiritual, it offers a fullness that cannot be reached with any material satisfaction. “Grace is overflowing, abundant, always enough. It is experienced as dynamic, energetic, supple, joyful, enabling, and generous to the point of extravagance. Where a quiet virtue such as patience is needed, grace provides the strength to be patient.”

Freely given, grace invites our response of gratitude. Gratitude requires paying attention, what spiritual leaders and mystics often call us to: an attitude of mindfulness. (How often Jesus invites us to “stay awake.”) Visser explores the French

word for gratitude (reconnaissance); the same word also means “recognition.” If you are interested in the history of cultural rituals of giving thanks, this book is a rich and fascinating read. She frequently quotes the mystics, of many faiths. She delves into the insight that constant giving thanks to God transcends the situation. In 1 Thess. 5:18, St. Paul urges us to give thanks to God in all circumstances. I was moved by the story of Etty Hillesum, the Jewish mystic who gave spiritual consolation to people in Dutch concentration camps and died in Auschwitz. She wrote this prayer in her diary:

“You have made me so rich, oh God, please let me share out Your beauty with open hands. My life has become an uninterrupted dialogue with You, oh God, one great dialogue. Sometimes when I stand in some corner of the camp, my feet planted on Your earth, my eyes raised toward Your heaven, tears sometimes run down my face, tears of deep emotion and gratitude. At night, too, when I lie in my bed and rest in You, Oh God, tears of gratitude run down my face, and that is my prayer...”

Page 332 from Hillesum, Etty. (1914-1943) “An interrupted life. The Diaries, 1941-1943, and Letters from Westerbork.” Translated by Arnold J. Pomerans. New York: Henry Holt, 1996

Visser observes that in our gratitude it is essential to truly appreciate the earth itself. The work humanity needs to do together now in addressing the climate disaster we have caused and calls for “grateful wonder at the world’s magnificence and vulnerability.” (Visser p. 362)

May this Autumn be a time of deepening Gratitude.

+ Lynne McNaughton



By Andrew Stephens-Rennie

Canon Andrew Stephens-Rennie is the Director of Missional Renewal for the Diocese of Kootenay

A number of years ago, when I was working with a Cathedral-based food program, we began to undertake significant changes to our meal service. Each and every change took shape in response to the following question:

How might we nourish our communities in ways that honour the agency, creativity, dignity, and worth of all who come to the table?

Like so many other churches, we had operated a charitable meal program for years. Over time, the program shifted and adapted in response to changing needs and changing leadership. Over time we lost touch with why we were doing what we were doing. What we desperately needed to do was ask how our fellowship at the meal program downstairs connected to our fellowship at Christ's table upstairs?

And so, we began to ask this question as a way of inviting theological and practical reflection on a disconnect we were beginning to sense in our food delivery model. If food was more than

fuel, and if people were more than their circumstances, were there ways that we might nourish more than the body? What about the head and the heart? What might happen if we stopped using a soup kitchen or food bank as the model that guided our imagination? What might happen if we started with our best experiences of a shared meal—a dinner party, a banquet, a wedding feast—and approached everything through that lens instead?

These questions caused us to reflect on each step of a person's journey between entering the church building, receiving and eating food, cleaning up and leaving, asking "how do each of these typical interactions reinforce connection or isolation?" and "which of our practices contribute to a person's honour, and which reinforce shame?"

As we did this, we became ever more aware of the ways different choices enforced distance between server and served. Locked doors, a windowless room, extra-wide counter-tops, plastic gloves, and plastic-wrapped sandwiches were all artifacts of our unspoken values. Our habits betrayed these values too. Rarely did volunteers sit down with those who had come in out of the rain to have lunch. When we finished our tasks, we stood around the perimeter of the room talking amongst ourselves. We observed the diners, but rarely did we join in. Instead, we waited until they left, and ate once we had once again

locked the doors.

Somewhere along the way, the Rev. Liz Hamel, a deacon in the parish, started to refer to the diners as a congregation. Wherever she went, Liz would talk about her ministry with the "downstairs congregation." For some, this was confusing at first. For others, it caught on. Her oft-repeated and prophetic observation helped to shift our understanding of what we were doing, and why.

Her words challenged us to move away from thinking about these meals as some sort of arms-length "outreach to those less-fortunate." What she was helping us to see was that God was present, and that something holy—something eucharistic—was happening, if only we had eyes to see.

In some ways, Liz was helping us to understand that we were starting to embody an image the late Bishop Jim Cruickshank often shared. "We can be certain God's Kingdom is near," Bishop Jim would say, "when people who appear to have no business eating together are found joyfully sharing food at the same table." When people are connecting with one another across dividing lines; when mutual transformation is taking place; we are being joined through Christ in God's healing work.

None of this happened overnight, of course, but there were signposts along the way. Key to this transformation, I think, was a growing sense that we ourselves (those otherwise known as the

leaders, the servers) were also members of this downstairs congregation. As we started to read ourselves into the question, we stopped only asking how we might nourish others. We began to ask more frequently how we and how other members of the Cathedral's congregations might find nourishment too.

I can still remember how in the early days of this transformation, our meal team was asked to serve dinner for a church event. As the meal was coming to a close, I heard a number of parishioners at a nearby table groaning about the food. I could feel myself turning beet red when I heard one person ask the others, "Can you believe they make us eat the same food they serve the homeless?"

The very next year, nearly everyone attending the event had something positive to say about the food. The thing is, we hadn't gone out of our way to make something special for the evening crowd that night. After some time processing the complaint and working through our feelings, we were also able to hear something of God's invitation. If the food we served wasn't good enough for one of the congregations, it wasn't good enough for any of them. That moment, as hard as it was, led to increased food quality, and another way of honouring each one who came to the table.

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Anglican Highway



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Column

The Joys and Challenges of Working with a Senior Aged Church Choir

By Norene Morrow

Norene Morrow is the music director at St George Anglican Church in West Kelowna.

In May 2025, I wrote an article entitled “When Our Ministries Minister to Us.” It was based on a survey I gave to my church choir with questions about why they sing in the choir. This was an eye-opening exercise because it made me appreciate how dedicated they are to this ministry. As a follow-up to that article, I now share my reflections on the joys and challenges of working with an older choir from a choral director’s perspective.

Back in 2023, when I stepped into the role of choir director at St. George’s, West Kelowna I had no idea what lay ahead. It was my first time in over 40 years of choral conducting where most of the singers were 65+; many of whom had little or no music training. The first challenge was to gain their trust. Legitimately, they didn’t know what to expect from me and were afraid I would make drastic changes because I was their

first leader who was a formally trained choir director. I expected them the sing choral warms, follow printed music, and come early to rehearse for Sunday services. Surprisingly, they adjusted very well. It was I who had a lot to learn; a process that has taken a good few years.

What I learned was that I had to slow down, to be patient, to be sensitive to their needs, to adjust my expectations, to not assume they knew musical things I take for granted, to remember that praise and encouragement is important, and to have fun. This required quite an adjustment for me because I was used to conducting cathedral choirs, university choirs, and high-level auditioned choirs - serious stuff with trained musicians that learn at a faster pace!

When working with a senior-aged choir, patience, slowing down, and sensitivity are so important. I have learned to take into account the limitations within the group, such as hearing and sight impairments, mobility issues, and vocal ranges. (As one who is now in the 65+ age bracket I

have become much more sympathetic to these issues.) Practically speaking I have had to remember to speak louder, slower, and expect to repeat instructions more than once as some of my singers take longer to process information and to find page numbers. By the same token, it is my job to train them in choir protocol and etiquette, and to stay focused. This means teaching them that it is not okay to chat as soon as they stop singing or when another part is rehearsing; teaching them to organize their music and turn to the next hymn once they are done singing the previous one; teaching them to look up from their music to watch me for tempos, entrances, cut offs, cues, and dynamics. All this has had to be accomplished while constantly reminding myself to be patient (which I admit is still sometimes difficult for me). I must reinforce what it means to be a choral singer through repetition, encouragement, and praise.

From a musical perspective one of the main issues with an older choir is their limited vocal range. As one gets older high notes aren’t as easy to sing as

they once were. I must transpose or choose music in comfortable keys and choose music within their capabilities. I have to teach them how to listen to each other and to shape their vowels and consonants with uniformity so their voices blend into one choral sound rather than a group of individuals because they are responsible for leading and supporting the congregational singing.

Creating a bond and working as a team is probably my most important learning. I make sure to greet the members and have conversations with them before rehearsals, listen to and share news, stories and jokes, as well as spend time getting to know them at coffee hour and other church events. Good choral leadership is more than just getting down to business. Because of St. George’s choir I have grown and learned to a better conductor and a better person, and for that I am truly thankful.

Rebuild the Magic: Camp OAC



By Deborah McGovern



(from left to right) Charlotte, Vivian, and Deborah.

Camp OAC's campaign to rebuild after the McDougall wildfire — officially launching with a Kick-off Celebration on October 3, 2026, bringing the Camp OAC community together for a service of blessing and gratitude, and a first look at the grounds where cabins, gathering spaces, and cherished camp traditions will rise again. Generations of campers have found belonging on this lakeshore, and this campaign will carry that legacy into camp's next chapter. The goal: \$1.6 million, raised over five years alongside insurance proceeds, to bring campers home. Learn more and support the rebuild at <https://www.campoac.com/pages/together-we-re-rebuilding-the-magic-of-camp>.



By David Tiessen

David Tiessen is Dean of the Cathedral Church of St Michael & All Angels, Kelowna

Column

Making Room



Graphic for this is a portion of Banksy's "Peaceful Hearts Doctor," San Francisco, 2010

In a first-person reflection recently published by the CBC, Manon Christensen shares a story of generosity that emerges out of the space between comfort and discomfort, safety and risk. This story — <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/first-person-loan-car-to-stranger-9.7306763> — tells of a chance encounter at the driver's licensing office, in which Christensen and her daughter overhear a new Canadian trying to book a driver's test. This fellow is disappointed to learn that the driver's licensing agency does not provide a car for people to take the test; it is necessary to provide one's own. Christensen writes that her daughter, upon hearing this, fixed her with a stare that said "We have a car. He does not." Hence – the problem could be fixed! However, the problem required stepping forward with an offer that would at minimum require time and inconvenience – and, beyond that, the

possibility of an accident of some kind. Nerve-racking!

There is much in this story, and it raises points to ponder. That it is Christensen's daughter who is the catalyst for what came to be an offer to let this fellow use their car to take the test bears subtle witness to the ways in which what is nerve-racking and risky can very easily (and often for very good reason) get in the way of generosity – once we have stuff, we want to keep it! Once we have stuff, we must manage it! (Of course, it is fair to point out that the voice from the side might also be the voice that doesn't own the car and isn't ultimately responsible for it either! But the voice from the side is always deeply important if we think it important to prevent ourselves from keeping too tight a grip on our stuff – we have a car; he does not!)

In this season of thanksgiving, we are reminded not only to give thanks, but to participate in the spirit that

makes thanksgiving possible – the spirit of generosity itself.

The word 'generosity' carries Latin roots: genere – to beget, produce, bring to life.

Put simply, to be generous is to participate in bringing forth life – to generate something in the world.

Christensen's first person narrative brings to the fore the tensions and challenges that can arise from such a spirit of generosity – she highlights that it challenges, for instance, the difference between being 'nice' and being 'good.' To move toward the good, she says, is to make space for another. To go beyond the norm "asks something of us."

St Paul writes that "Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10, NRSV). Love, in other words, pushes us to consider that the basics of doing no harm – of being nice – are stretched and expanded when love joins the conversation.

The philosopher Alain Badiou, in a book titled, "St Paul, the Foundation of Universalism" (2003), reflects on this passage of scripture, and argues that to put law and love together is to embrace "the living unity of thinking and doing" that "turns life itself into a universal law". Badiou concludes: "This is what Paul calls love" (Badiou, 2003, p.87).

That will require the wisdom of discernment and the Spirit's direction in the moment, but the default setting of a generous spirit is perhaps best rooted in an awareness that to participate in what is good means being open to that voice from the side that calls us to make some room so that new life has space to come to the fore. This might well be at the very heart of generosity, and so also at the heart of love.

Or as St Augustine of Hippo put it: "Love, and do what you will."



By Ray Turner

The Reverend Ray Turner is a retired priest residing in Oliver BC.

Memorial Kitchen for OAC



Maggie Turner known as "Cookie."

Maggie Turner was an exceptional person. She raised six children while married to a husband who had no time for church. However, due to her upbringing, and Christian influence, each of the children found a place to work in the church. Her eldest son (Joe) became a licensed lay readers for the Diocese of Kootenay. Her second

son (Alfred) became a lay reader for Cranbrook. The oldest daughter (Mary) became the church secretary in Cranbrook. The third son (Stan) became the head Knight of Columbus in Alberta and then nationally. The fourth son (Ray) became a priest who has served for 63 years. And now the youngest daughter has become a licensed lay minister in Oliver.

When Ray became a priest in 1963, he was elected chair of the Okanagan Anglican Camp (OAC). In 1965 the lady who was scheduled to cook at the camp lost her husband in June of that summer. This was the middle of June with two weeks to Camp Opening and trying to find another cook in the Okanagan seemed impossible and so I approached my mother to see if she would accept cooking for the summer, even though she had no experience in quantity cooking. She agreed and volunteered for the task. By the end of the summer, she had acquired the name "Cookie." She was asked to return the

following year, which she did and continued for a total of nine years. She also acted as an ex-officio "Camp Mother" for many of the campers. She declared these were the happiest days of her life to the point that she was approached Bishop Ted Scott for permission to have her ashes scattered by the cross at the camp.

The camp took on such a significance for the family that two of her granddaughters were married in the outside Chapel, and another granddaughter would have been, had it not been for the fire.

Maggie's family has decided to launch a fundraiser to pay for a new Memorial Kitchen by which she is remembered. Contributions may be made to the Diocese of Kootenay, camp OAC Memorial Kitchen.

Column



By David Burrows

The Reverend David Burrows is the Incumbent for the Parish of Kokanee: St Saviour’s, Nelson, and St Marks, Kaslo.

Generosity, Gratitude: God’s choice, our response



“We Rejoice to be God’s chosen”
John L. Bell, ©1999, WGWG, GIA Publications
Tune: Nettleton, American Traditional

Last month, as the temperatures cooled slightly, and the wildfire smoke eased, I ventured out on a few solo kayak trips in the local area. I enjoy the beauty of the West Kootenays, the gift of life, and the privilege I hold to have the skill, means, and desire to explore nature in this way.

Praying with every stroke of my paddle, I contemplated parts of the journey of my life. I thanked God for my parents, my daughters, the places and experiences I’ve had the privilege of experiencing.

‘Thank you God for this opportunity to be immersed in creation’

‘Thank you for the gift of nature in all its forms’

‘Thank you for this day, this life, and your presence within it’

There were numerous prayers, some deep and soulful, some somewhat su-

perficial and self centred, as if I were the only human who had ever paddled this route, experienced this beauty, or had ever lived at all.

The faith I hold encourages me to revel in creation, to be grateful for the many gifts of life, and respond in thanksgiving through loving service to humanity, and to all of creation.

Somewhere in the midst of my recreation, my prayers, and my service, I tend to focus more on the gratitude I hold, rather than God’s generosity. I observe and respond from a first person perspective, and at times can get caught up in my personal experiences and encounters, rather than see the world from a wider lens.

Maybe that is the challenge of responding in gratitude - acknowledging the generosity of the giver. In so many ways, society and the world encourage us to give, take, share, respond as autonomous individuals. The things I give and share are mine, the things I take and respond to come from others, but are directed to me.

How exhausting the world is! Society encourages us to earn, accumulate, give, and take, all from a personal perspective. The Christian faith that I adhere to reminds me that all I have, all I encounter, all I release, all - is gift. All of life is a gift and blessing. My sin is presuming that I am due anything because of who I am, that I have ownership or right to anything at all.

God is the primary, and first actor in all things. God is creator, we are created. We are gifted due to God’s generosity, not due to our ability or to any thought that our actions give us special privilege.

God chooses us: God chooses humanity, God chooses the earth to blossom and grow. We participate in this creation; we are not the Creator. We are invited to respond to God’s choice, and to respond to God’s generosity.

As I paddle each week, I try to rejoice in the choices God has made for me, and for all creation. I rejoice in the gift of God’s love, hoping that with each stroke, I can respond in gratitude to this great love that is seen all around.

We rejoice to be God’s chosen not through virtue, work or skill, but because God’s love is generous, unconformed to human will. And because God’s love is restless, like the surging of the sea, we are pulled by heaven’s dynamic to become, not just to be.

We rejoice to be God’s chosen, to be gathered to God’s side, not to build a pious ghetto or be steeped in selfish pride; but to celebrate the goodness of the One who sets us free from the smallness of our vision to become, not just to be.

We rejoice to be God’s chosen, to align with heaven’s intent, to await where we are summoned and accept where we are sent. We rejoice to be God’s chosen and, amidst all that we see, to anticipate with wonder that the best is yet to be.

Around and About the Diocese



On Saturday, August 29, Kokanee parish (St Saviour’s, Nelson and St Mark’s, Kaslo), joined together at St Mark’s for a parish picnic.



Armstrong-Enderby Parish may be one parish, but we worship separately most of the time, St George’s Enderby at 9:30 and St James Armstrong at 11:00 on each Sunday morning. However, if there is a 5th Sunday in the month, as there was in August, we worship together. It’s wonderful to worship with a larger gathering, to sing with a larger gathering and we always finish with a pot luck lunch. A wonderful time of getting to know one another better.

Column



In Times of Distress— Many Ways to be Thankful

By Helen Hall

Helen Hall belongs to the Spiritual Development Committee, which encourages people to grow ever deeper in relationship with God and to pray. As people across the Diocese pray, the ministries of the church will flourish! Amen.

It is the oddest thing to be writing for an October publication in early August. A publication that will be linked to, and associated with, Harvest Festival or National Thanksgiving, when we are still fighting wildfires all over the province.

It has been a difficult season for many of us in the Diocese of Kootenay. So many wildfires, so many homes lost, so many people displaced. So much wildlife lost, so much forest lost. One's health is affected with the smoke and particulate in the air we breathe.

How to be thankful, how to focus on all that is good, how to remember that there are things to be thankful for while living with these disasters?

As Christians, we are reminded that we have hope. Hope for the sunshine tomorrow! Hope — a feeling of expectation, a looking forward to better days. Hope — can be a belief, an assurance, confidence. a promise!

Hope, in itself, is something to be thankful for.

We pray in confidence, we pray boldly, assured that our prayers are heard and will be answered. God has promised that it is so. We can pray with an optimistic mindset, knowing that God's will, as our Creator, our Abba, our Nurturing Mother, will give us all that we need.

I have learned that many of our wildfires started this year are human caused. Arson, or neglect or ignorance - but human caused. So, do we hope that people will learn to do better? Do we ask God to teach people respect? Or do we pray for forgiveness. Have we not taught people to respect nature, to respect our neighbours, to respect fire and the damage it can do? Are we part of the problem?

How to find a balance — do I offer thanksgivings that my house wasn't burned this year? Will I be thankful that my eyes can still see green trees and a small herd of deer? That I am one of the lucky ones?

In a world that is on fire, where do we find thanksgiving in our hearts?

We are told to be thankful: In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4. 6) Part of the five fingers of prayer that I was taught in Sunday School: Thanksgiving a part of every prayer.

I think our perspective shifts when we bring to God our worries and cares, our fears and our hopes though the lens of thanksgiving; looking at the many ways we have been blessed.

Psalm 100

I Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

2 *Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.*

3 Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his[a];

we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

*4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;*

give thanks to him and praise his name.

*5 For the Lord is good and his love
endures forever;*

his faithfulness continues through all generations.

So, this year at my thanksgiving table, I will be thankful for much. For the presence of family members, for the gift of friends, for the seasons as they come and go, for the feast that will be on the table, for the joy found in church companionship, and especially for the presence of God in my life. It is more than enough.

Continued from page 3
"The Basement Banquet"

What I remember most about that season was the way these downstairs transformations rippled out, and contributed to transformation elsewhere. At Thanksgiving, we decorated the Church as usual. But this year, it was decorated with food, and plenty of it. Stock pots and coffee urns were interspersed with packages of lentils, beans, and canned tomatoes. Sugar pumpkins, leeks and butternut squash replaced decorative gourds. Framed pictures from a community art project could be seen by all. Carrots and apples, garlic, kale, and beets were all on display, the basis for the following week's menu.

Looking around the church that day, it felt as though something special was happening. It felt as though little by little, bit by bit, two things that ought to be together were being put back together. We hadn't put an end to income disparity leading to poverty. We hadn't solved the affordability crisis. We hadn't fed the entire city, but something was happening. Food was being paired with honour, and faith with justice.

What's more, that Sunday we found one more way of embodying the kind of gratitude that Jesus invites us disciples into: "freely you have received; freely give (Matthew 10:8)."



News & Views

From Around the Anglican Dioceses of Canada



Identity in the Spirit

There is a place we reach when we’re doing the thing we’re particularly good at; most of us have felt it. It’s the moment when everything we know runs out, and yet something is still being asked of us.

A teacher or project manager midway through the plan when it all falls apart. The chaplain at the hospital bed with no idea what to do or say, if anything at all. The one at three in the morning, out of ideas, comforting someone who won’t be settled. We come to the end of ourselves, yet there is still more to be done.

Then, seemingly out of nowhere, whatever it is comes. The right words or the right silence, the gesture or flash of inspiration, the inclination to be patient and pray, the very thing that moment needed, shows up. Afterward, upon reflection, we think, That was good. Better than I thought I had in me. Where did it come from?

That something, or rather someone, has a name: the Holy Spirit. Now, it is tempting to think of the Holy Spirit as an occasional visitor, a rush of wind at Pentecost, that feeling you get from a beautiful worship service, or after a really great Bible study conversation. While that may be true, it doesn’t begin to do justice to the Spirit’s work in our lives because it is the Spirit who gives us the way forward when we are at the edge of our capacities.

While the Spirit meets us like this when we come to the end of ourselves, there is one place we perceive it more clearly than anywhere else: in our gifts. When we are really working within them.

Paul writes about the gifts of the Spirit to the church in Corinth.

He runs through a list: wisdom and knowledge, faith, healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, the discernment of spirits, tongues and their interpretation; there are more, of course, but in Corinth at that moment, those were the ones that mattered. The point he is making in the letter is that no one has all of them. The gifts your neighbour has been given are probably not the same as yours; that is good, because the Church needs them all across many bodies. Thus, we are each given particular things to do, and we all have our particular ways of doing them.

The focus of Paul’s message is often on the list which Paul provides, and it can be easy to gloss over how he concludes his message: “All these are inspired/activated by one and the same Spirit.”

In his book *The Sanctifier*, Archbishop of Mexico Luis Martínez offers an image of what this activation looks like. He writes, “Let us imagine a great artist creating a masterpiece. He arranges for the preparation of the canvas and the way in which the colours are to be combined. He then calls on his best pupils to share the work. He permits them to do the least important or least perfect part of it. But when he comes to the delicate, finest parts where he will reveal his genius, where the inspiration will be crystallized, then the pupils put down their brushes and the master takes over.” [1]

If we think about how a painting is actually made, one does not begin with the light on the water or variations of green in the leaves. Nor do we start out with the more refined elements of our gifts.

One begins with big shapes: the horizon line, the clump of the trees on the left, the path the river takes through the field. That is the work of the pupils,

good and real work. However, we, in our humanity, can only ever take it so far. The finest, most perfect touches are always those of the master.

A temptation in this moment is to treat that limitation as the gift running out or our own failure to be ready for the moment. But that limit is not the failing of the gift at all. Laying down those big shapes is what brings the painting to the point where the master’s hand is required. The pupil who works to the edge of her skill has not fallen short; she has faithfully carried the work as far as it was hers to carry.

Jesus makes something like a promise about this. Warning his disciples what to expect when they are hauled before synagogues, rulers, and authorities, He tells them, “And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” [2]

That may be the shape of the promise to the disciples in that moment, but it is certainly not always the way it works, and anyone who has lived very long knows it. The Spirit’s work is not always the words we want or would have chosen. Sometimes the thing to do is simply to stay, sit, and not speak but to pray in the silence of our hearts. Or sometimes it seems like the Spirit is not at work at all.

When that happens”and it will happen”it’s easy to pretend that the Spirit was not at work. Of that, too, we must be wary. There are seasons when nothing seems to be given that we can recognize as help, and we are left to keep working for what seems like no good reason at all. When that happens, we must remember that the Spirit is always at work in us, whether we feel it in any given moment or not.

to happen, we have to work to the point of our own failure and hand it off precisely so that someone else can get the Glory.

But that handover is not a disappearance. The pupil does not vanish when the master takes the brush; the painting is still, in part, hers. We are not overwritten by the Spirit’s working through us; we are, in fact, most ourselves in the Spirit, in Christ, when that happens. It is in our giving over, not our holding on, that we embody in our identity as Christians, as ones who act by the will of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the fullest sense. We empty ourselves so that the Light of God may fill us and shine through us.

There is one more place where we must take some care. It’s easy to think that, like the painting, our gifts and our lives in Christ are brought slowly to completion, layer by detail, and that can make it sound as though we are working our way toward something we do not yet have, a salvation that still lies somewhere ahead of us. That is not the Gospel.

Fleming Rutledge, when speaking about being transformed by the work of God, puts it plainly. Our “right-making, or rectification, is not a process. It is already true in Christ” in the power of the Spirit, there is an “already quality” about this proclamation. It really is quite true to say that the Gospel tells us, “Become what you already are.” [3] (*The Crucifixion*, 555)

That means that the painting is already finished and perfect in Christ. His refining of our gifts and lives is not a labour towards an earned salvation. It is the work of becoming more of who we already are the good work of living into the identity that is already, in Christ, our own.

This is our identity in Christ, in the Spirit; The Master taking up the brush, working in and through us far more than we could ever have asked or imagined.

[1] Luis Martinez, *The Sanctifier* (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul Press, 1982), 120.

[2] Luke 12:11-12 (RSV).

[3] Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ* (Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), 555.

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