

## Thursday in the Third Week of Easter April 30, 2020

After his cousin baptizes Jesus, Creator leads Jesus out into the wilderness to experience social isolation by himself as set out for us in Matthew 4:1-11. In this generation, Indigenous females also enter into fasts out on the land as males have done for thousands of years, not only to mark the transition from childhood into the life of a young adult but also for other times of spiritual healing and renewal. On these quests, visions are sought in order to guide the individual in the next part of their journey.

### What in the passage catches my attention?

In this passage used at the beginning of Lent, it is Creator who leads Jesus born in Bethlehem during the rule of King Herod and at the time when Magi from far in the east followed a quest to find a very unique child in the area around Jerusalem as it was Creator who led Jesus out into the wilderness to be immersed in the River Jordan. It was Creator who gave direction to John the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth to go out onto the land and to call people to take responsibility for their personal and corporate actions, rediscovering themselves as being intimately connected to a very generous, loving, and just Creator. Matthew tells us, **“Then the Spirit led Jesus up into the wilderness...”** Matthew 4:1

Spiritual people from many places and Peoples around the world since our creation have gone out onto the Land in order to experience physical deprivations and to connect with Creator in a very special way. After 40 days in the heat of Grandfather Sun and 40 nights in the cool light of Grandmother Moon, Jesus was starving. Some who fast deprive themselves of food and water, allowing themselves a blanket and the gift of fire. Anyone who fasts quickly learns that we are never alone. We bring with us complex sets of relationships which shape our identity. Hopefully, the memories and teachings of our Ancestors and those who are still alive are not overwhelming, either through memories of negative experiences or in honouring the many gifts of life which these amazing people have given. Out on the Land, certain places become sacred and safe for generations through time. On the Bruce Peninsula, many such places have such spectacular vistas where it is very easy to connect with Creator and the wonders of this creation.

Physical deprivation leads people to confront many different kinds of temptations. Out in the wilderness, Jesus born in Bethlehem is no different than we are today. Matthew tells us that at the end of his period of fasting, Jesus was starved and after facing temptations, his needs were met by spiritual beings who visited him....a host of creatures beyond time and space.

### What is God saying in this passage?

In these extraordinary times, it is vitally important to get out onto the Land...or for boaters, out onto the Waters..or for those who like to fly, up in the Air..or for those few who love space, out into the Universe.

Maple Sap has run through the veins of sugar trees. The Snow Drops have risen from the cold earth and shown us their white blooms. Hyacinths are blessing us with purple flowerets. Daffodils adorn the world with splashes of yellow. Tulips of so many colours are pushing upwards towards the light. In my wife's indoor garden by the south facing patio doors, marigolds and a cucumber plant are blooming while the cosmos plants are sporting bright orange flowers near the planter of lettuce by the family room window. Fertilizers, soil, and grass seed are ready for another spring season at our household. In

this northern hemisphere, many look forward to getting outside to connect with Creator, to plant, and to tend what Creator has given to us protect at this time of the year.

In the past 500 years, relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples deteriorated, particularly following Confederation through the evolution of separate pieces of colonial legislation into the establishment of the Indian Act in 1876 and the subsequent revisions of these federal political policies and their ongoing implementation. Through the Indian Act, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs determined how and where Indigenous Peoples lived. In the past, local Indian Agents were given power to implement the stipulations of the Indian Act and the authority to utilize the local police as required to maintain compliance to what non-Indigenous Peoples in Canada identified as attainable goals. As Sir John A. MacDonald put it before Parliament, the objective of one strategy was “to take the Indian out of the child”, thereby solving the “Indian problem”. The ways in which Indigenous Peoples had lived, traded, spoke, connected with Creator, took care of creation on their traditional territories for thousands of years were swept aside through these pieces of legislation and the application of their policies. In spite of these destructive dynamics, Indigenous Peoples have kept the teachings of their Ancestors and maintained their spiritual practices, demonstrating an inspirational resiliency. Indigenous Peoples have much to share with us as we move forward out of this current wilderness.

In the sixth podcast of SACRED TEACHINGS: WISDOM OF THE LAND on the Anglican Church of Canada website, Dr. Martha Many Grey Horses from the Kainai First Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy in Alberta speaks about establishing and maintaining a spiritual connection with Mother Earth through our senses. This Knowledge Keeper also teaches about the importance of spiritual values and practices needed for the preservation of all that Creator has given to all Peoples. Her own experiences in residential schools which began when she was five years of age did not keep her from eventually earning a social work degree and then a doctorate in education. In the third podcast of SACRED TEACHINGS: PATH TO THE STRONGHOLD on the Anglican Church of Canada website, Tyson Halkett from Montreal Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan speaks about the resilience of his People in dealing with food insecurity, the lack of clean water, and the importance of getting out onto the Land and Waters in order to connect with Creator and avoid this current pandemic.

In this passage, the reality of evil is acknowledged. Our need to stay connected to Creator is also identified as essential to begin a new and abundant life.

### **What is God asking us to be and do?**

Seek Creator among all that Creator has given to meet our daily needs and to tend for future generations. Be filled with awe and wonder. Give thanks. Work with others who strive to ensure that everyone from coast to coast to coast are secure in their access to food and clean water. Keep safe. Make sure that health care workers and others providing essential services do not face unnecessary risks to their health and well-being. Support the leaders in Indigenous communities to contain this pandemic and ensure the health and well-being of everyone entrusted to their care. Acknowledge that Creator has brought life into being as well as what Creator continues to create now and into the future.

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