

Sunday, August 23, 2020
Pentecost 12
Grace Lutheran Church
Somers Point, NJ 08244
Interim Pastor: Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf
“Faithful Followers”



O God, with all your faithful followers of every age, we praise you, the rock of our life! Faithful Followers we are people God has called to hear the story, know the story, tell the story and love the story! The Faithful Followers who have touched my life are those who prayed and praised God. St. Mary praises God, "My soul magnifies the Lord..."; Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people...."; St. Francis of Assisi, "Lord make me an

instrument of your peace..." St. Patrick, "Christ be with me, Christ within me..."

Navajo Poet Lucy Tapahanso reminds her people, "We must remember the world our ancestors traveled. Always wear the song they gave us. Remember we are made of prayers. Now we leave wrapped in blankets of love and wisdom. (Navajo means both beauty and blessing). Always wear the songs our ancestors gave us and wrap ourselves in blankets of love and wisdom."

I still remember the NJ Pineland's story, *God's Water* -- a story of love and wisdom. Faithful Followers share God's story. C. S. Lewis in *The Inklings* returns to Christianity through his friends, after a long conversation with Tolkien until 3 a.m. and another with Dyson until 4 a.m. Twelve days later, Lewis wrote to Arthur Greeves, "I have just passed on from believing in God to definitely believing in Christ - in Christianity. I will try to explain this another time. My long night talk with Dyson and Tolkien had a good deal to do with it." C. S. Lewis made spiritual progress with Faithful Followers.

In my retirement, I traveled to Mount Rushmore and the monument "Crazy Horse" still in progress. I remember the responded to someone, "My land is where my people are buried." I stopped at "Prairie Edge and Sioux Trading Post," bought CDs and a book of a Native American who I did not recognize, *Nicholas Black Elk Medicine Man, Missionary, Mystic*. The cover displayed a humbly aged bowed man. I bought it to learn about his mysticism. In 1888 (prior to baptism), Black Elk was separated from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in London and connected to a smaller one "Mexican Joe" Shelly Show. He was on a quest to learn all he could about "The White Man's Ways," especially learning about Christianity he

saw practiced in Europe. He was interested in a religion that was life-long. In his correspondence, he states, "I live remembering God...The show runs day and night...But all along, I live remembering God so he enables me to do it all...I know the white man's customs well. One custom is very good. Whoever believes in God will find good ways...of white man's many customs only his faith, the white man's beliefs about God's Will, and how they act according to it. I wanted to understand...So Lakota people trust God! Now all along I trust in God."

In 1890, Black Elk survived the massacre of wounded Knee. Baptized December 6, 1904, and after instruction and training, he became a dynamic Catholic Missionary to his Lakota community - - a Faithful Follower who shared God's story and his visions of God's unity for all people.

Faithful Followers like Mr. Rogers and Mother Theresa also shaped my faith. Recently, a close friend and parishioner Betty Bolch who recently died had given me a prayer she would say everyday, "Lord I confess I am not what I ought to be, but t thank you Lord that I am not what I used to be." Faithful Followers are also anonymous who leave their work to the church such as this prayer, "Grant O Lord God, that what we have heard with our ears, and sung with our lips, we may believe in our hearts and practice in our lives. For Jesus Christ's Sake. Amen"

Martin Luther said, "Anyone who is to find Christ must find the church. How could anyone know where Christ is and what faith is in him, unless he knows where Christ's believers are?"

Amen.