

February 5, 2017 Fifth Sunday after Epiphany:
Matthew 5: 13

Last Sunday I pointed out that emergent spirituality recognizes the Wisdom of **God** spread across all faith traditions.

So, on Monday evening, Vicki and I gathered with at least 200 people, at one of many vigils held in Quebec and across the country.

We gathered at the Dorval Mosque, the one we at Mountainside have been working with to support the settlement of Syrian refugees.

We gathered to offer our condolences and stand in solidarity with them.

We were all still in shock at the killing of 6 Moslem men, and the wounding of 19 more, in Quebec City as they peacefully prayed the evening before. Imagine if this had happened to us while we were worshipping last Sunday.

Unexpectedly, Mehmet Deger the president of the mosque invited our group inside. He and his wife welcomed each one of us. Then those who were moved to speak spoke from the heart. We sang a raging granny piece “Oh Fearful Ones” and the speeches continued. The media was there and recorded our witness.

I would like all of us to share in this too.

So, let’s stand and sing this song which we have sung before, in solidarity with faith-filled people the world over. We all know it; the tune is “O Christmas Tree.” It is printed in the bulletin.

Matthew 5: 14-16

Monday night, Vicki and I were deeply moved by the experience of empathy, compassion, solidarity, and commitment to care for and protect another faith community. We were different but we discovered we were also deeply connected. Vicki and I felt that connection in a profoundly physical and spiritual way that joined heart and head together. But I have to admit to you, we almost didn't get there.

As many know Monday is our coveted day off. We went up to Saint Sauveur early in the morning so I could enjoy a few hours of skiing, and Vicki could remain in the chalet with hot chocolate and just read.

On the way we heard the news about the shootings. Vicki checked her emails and saw one from the coordinator of the West Island Churches Syrian refugee committee announcing a vigil downtown and suggesting one of their own in the West Island at the Dorval Mosque. We individually thought to ourselves ***“that is great, but I won't be there because it is Monday and it will be too cold to stand around outside at 6pm.”***

That afternoon Vicki received and shared an email from a Raging Granny who was a member of her church. The Raging Granny couldn't make it back to the West Island in time but was sure Vicki would want to go. Vicki forwarded the email to her outreach committee and thought out loud ***“That's great but I won't be there because it is Monday and it will be too cold to stand around outside at 6pm.”***

I thought quietly ***“that's great, but I won't be there because it is Monday and it will be too cold to stand around outside at 6pm, and besides my church isn't on the West Island.”***

Then, half an hour later, the daughter of one of Vicki's Church musicians who is part of the “West Island Moms Network” emailed. She asked if Vicki could send out a flock email notifying every one of the vigil. It wasn't possible due to a computer problem, but Vicki informed her that the West Island Social Justice network and the Raging Grannies Network were in full swing, and would be there.

Vicki turned to me and said *“That is great, but I won’t be there because it is Monday and it will be too cold to stand around outside at 6pm. But I need to show up don’t I?”*

I disagreed. *“It’s Monday and it will be too cold for you.”*

But you know how the **Spirit** starts scratching away at the back of our mind, not quite accepting our rationalization, and not letting it go.

Well about ten minutes later I returned to Vicki’s side and declared *“even though it is Monday and it will be too cold to stand around outside, you need to be there and I will accompany you.”*

There was no response.

Ten minutes later another parishioner call to ask if she could pick up some used tapers to distribute at the vigil. Vicki told her where to find them, hung up the phone and then yelled out. *“Alright already I hear you. Even though it is Monday and it will be cold outside, I AM going to the vigil!”*

And we went and shared a profound spiritual experience.

So, where am I going with this?

Well there is a parallel here with our gospel lesson. Vicki and I had the *salt* of compassion *but we still had to share it*. We all had the *salt* that evening, the seasoning to mitigate the bitterness of violence, and the banality of evil.

As Christians, as followers of **Jesus**, we are *salt*. We are called out to be and do the **‘salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth.’**

Now our gospel lesson seems to fret and focus as much on losing the *salt* as retaining the *salt*. That is understandable when dealing with the beginning of a religious movement. But we are in a different place and time.

Every time we participate in God’s Dream we are increasing the *salt* in our lives and seasoning other lives with it.

Every time we act with care and compassion with empathy and understanding, we are sharing *salt* and storing up more *salt*!

Every time we spice up life with an attitude of gratitude, and a spirit of generosity people are able to taste godliness.

When our faith is deeply ingrained in us, when our faith is practiced year in and year out, the *salt* is there. It's there when it needs to be called upon. Our faithfulness can season a situation no matter how unexpected or out of the ordinary it might appear. Even on our day off. Even out in the cold, godliness can still be tasted.

So don't worry! God's seasoning remains with us like muscle memory and helpful habits. As Vicki and I were reminded this week: ***We just have to get on with it.***

Now as I mentioned earlier, Vicki and I experienced a profound sense of connection with this Muslim faith community, and those like us who were there to support and protect them. And there was more. As people shared from the heart, faces began to *glow*. Folk became *radiant*, and the room just *lit* up.

There we were fulfilling our Gospel lesson that calls us to be '*light-bearers*'. **Light-bearers bringing out the God colours of the world.** Together we *shone* with such beauty and I thought "*how wonderful for the children who are here sharing in the Spirit that lights up our lives for one another.*"

We were as public as a "*city on a hill*," an '*open house*' inviting others to find the *light* of **Divine Unity**. And to think, *Vicki and I nearly left our light hidden under a basket at home.*

Application for Today:

Don't be afraid of losing your **saltiness**.

We just have ***to show up and share it.***

Don't be afraid of letting your **light shine**.

As we share the *light*, we are the ***light of the World.***

How We Keep the Faith

This week, amidst the many vigils and public acts of support for the Muslim community in Quebec, there also has been a marked increase in hate attacks on mosques and Muslims. There have been 41 reported incidents this week, 10 of which the police are treating as criminal. How can this be?

There is a story from the Hasidic tradition of the Rabbi, who was asked one day by a student,

“How can one tell when the new day has come?”

The Rabbi reversed the question and asked his student,

“You tell me how you can know.”

The student guessed,

“is it when the rooster crows to signal a new dawn?”

“No,” the Rabbi answered.

“Is it then perhaps when one can discern the silhouette of a tree against the sky?”

“No,” he was told.

“The surest way to know when the night is over

and when a new day has come

is when you can look into the face of a stranger,

the one who is so different from you,

and recognize him as your brother. See her as your sister.

Until that day comes, it will always be night.”

Friends Quebec needs our **salt** and **light** more than ever, if the **New Day** is to dawn.

We have shared stories and sung songs that have touched our heart and mind.

Now, settle into **God** in prayer. Follow your breathing to that prayerful place.

Allow yourself to just be. Sit with all of this in silence for the next few minutes

knowing yourself as a salt-seasoners and light-bearers....

Now let us pray together as **Jesus** taught us saying.... Amen.