

A Letter from the Rector

June 23, 2017

The righteous flourish like the palm tree,
and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
They are planted in the house of the Lord;
they flourish in the courts of God.
In old age they still produce fruit;
they are always green and full of sap.”

—Psalm 92:12-14

This portion of Psalm 92 was printed in an article* written by Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold. I remember reading this article while I was lost in the swirling mists of discerning my call to the priesthood. I had been pondering God’s call for some time, but one of the fears that always held me back was that of “drying up” pastorally or theologically. I was afraid that I would run out of sermons to preach, caring words and deeds to provide, lessons to teach, fellowship to offer, etc. for what I thought the people of God deserve and need from a minister. In a way, it was a fear of not being rooted deeply enough for the nutrients I would need to sustain my ministry.

It was during this time that I picked up the article from Bp. Griswold and read this psalm and read about his friendship with Brother Paul Wessinger of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist. I read about the ministry of Br. Paul—his simple yet powerful sermons that would inspire children and adults alike to engage in acts of love and fellowship with their neighbors, his patient and compassionate presence with family and friends and foes alike, his unceasing generosity of spirit—and how after 90 years of life Br. Paul still found new life in his ministry. He still found new surprises in the scripture, relished opportunities to include others in fellowship, and was still a learner as much as a teacher. It was in reading about his remarkable man that I realized something important about ministry: If one is planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish in the courts of God. Br. Paul was—even at 90—still producing fruit, still green, still full of sap, and it was because he was rooted deeply in his community among his fellow children of God.

I pushed onward in answering God’s call, trusting that I too will be nourished and kept green by the rich soil of my community. This is true for all ministers—not only priests but all of us who play a role in God’s mission of love and reconciliation in this world—that we can do amazing things in ministry if we are planted in the house of God. We can continually surprise and be surprised by each other, keep learning and growing and teaching each other, and be people never running out of compassion for each other.

We can do this because being rooted in this community together feeds us and sustains us just as God intended when the Church was formed. I am forever thankful to Bp. Griswold for his perfectly timed article, to Br. Paul for his inspirational ministry, to God for the beautiful psalm, and to all of you for being the good soil in which I am planted.

Faithfully,

Steven

* "A Tribute to Paul Wessinger, SSJE," by the Rt. Rev. Frank T. Griwold. *Cowley Magazine* (Vol. 36 No. 1 issue), published November 29, 2009, by the Society of Saint John the Evangelist.