

Beyond the Loyal Soldier

Easter 5, 1 Peter Ch. 2; John, Ch. 14. ~ 5/18/2014

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We all develop what spiritual guides call a Loyal Soldier-the guardian at our moral gate, the gatekeeper who decides what's good , what's bad, who's in and who's out. The Loyal Soldier comes first from our parents, then teachers, superiors, and the culture around us. We start by following their directions; we want to get along with those round us and the higher ups. We report for duty and ask, how am I coming across, will people approve of me?

There comes a time to look beyond our Loyal Soldier, move beyond the guardian at the gate, and come to know those we've kept outside, parts of ourselves we've kept outside and perhaps judged unworthy. It's time to follow what Peter said of Christ; "Look to the stone the builders rejected but is precious in God's sight." We go in love to form relationships with those we have rejected. We're called to say to the Loyal Soldier, the guardian at the gate, "Thank you for helping me get this far. Thank you helping me report for duty." Now it's time to move beyond duty, and consider those pushed aside, or left unnoticed. It's time to shine some light on the rejected others and parts of ourselves. Maybe one of those stones outside the gate is of great value, a pearl of great price, the chief cornerstone of the house God wants to build.

In a stone arch, the keystone is often a small stone- not very impressive by itself. It's the one that holds the bigger, heavier stones together. The bigger stones fall without the keystone in place. Peter says Christ is the keystone, the one often at first rejected, outside the gate. Born in a rural town, Christ was at first ignored by all the higher ups, outside the royal priestly cast. He socializes with the outcasts, and invites the lame and sick to supper. When he begins to attract attention from the higher ups, they plot to put him to death. They think they're doing their duty. But The Spirit of Christ moves beyond rejection. He becomes our center of communion, our keystone, holding things together, Jesus says do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many rooms and I go to prepare a place for you. He is the Way, the keystone, his rooms are for those who first have no place.

How do you and I look beyond the guardian at the gate, to those we may have rejected first time around.? The journey for each of us can be quite different. Some of us may have been taught to be always meek and mild. Our Loyal Soldier said always defer, be sweet . Never be assertive."Aw shucks,

not me” The way to follow Christ for the always deferring may be to stand up and be more assertive. The new room Christ prepares may be a place to stand in conversation with others. Others among us may have been taught from the beginning to grab all the gusto you can get. Be assertive and bold, stand up and speak. For those of us in this group, the way to Christ may be to sit down and listen. The new room, outside the gate, may be a place to sit down and listen.

Our parish has traveled both ways, on both roads we used to be part of the establishment of Auburn with other big houses and churches nearby. We were part of a manufacturing center with a lot of gusto- jobs, money and power from the Androscoggin. Now the big mills have smaller enterprises. Traffic passes us by. We're outside the gates of power - more like the town where Jesus was born. Now it's time to listen to those without jobs, without a friend....time to share meals, and attract new enterprise to the old spaces. In my first year here, I'm aware of St. Michael's ongoing witness and conversations with medical centers, hospitals, colleges, schools - including the Franklin St. School next door, shelters, the Chamber of Commerce, and our own families across four generations.

Christ invites here on Sunday to say to the Loyal Soldier. Thank you. Thank you for helping me navigate the week. Now please step aside. Let me, let us, and look for the keystone outside the gate we guard all week. Let's look for the stones the Loyal Soldier may have first rejected, the one precious in God's sight. Who has fed us this week.? To whom are we grateful? Have we said, Thank you? Do not let your hearts be troubled. Christ is waiting for us, breaking bread for us, preparing rooms for all of us to dwell.

Amen