



Community of Christ

Daily Bread

Daily Bread: Thursday, 13 June 2019 –

Vickie MacArthur of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

My Love Affair With A Lizard (Part 1)

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.
Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord. —Psalm 98:4–6

Often God comes to us in surprising, yet delightful, forms. God is hidden in the ordinary. Yet, if we're too busy or caught up in our own thoughts and activities, we may not recognize God's gift of presence.

A few years ago, I had a four-day love affair with a lizard, a cute, scaly creature that never looked at me straight on but somehow sensed every movement I made. I'm not sure what your relationship is with lizards, but I never used to pay attention to them, let alone love them. So how exactly did I fall in love with one? Maybe I should back up a bit to help you understand.

I had the opportunity to be part of the first three-year Spiritual Formation and Companionship program offered by Community of Christ. Every time there was a short break, I would find myself wandering over to a small bench close to the pond. Here I could retreat and clear my mind— just sit...watch...listen...to the sound of

birds, the trickle of water, the leaves fluttering in the breeze. I could almost sense the trees breathing around me.

One time when I came, there was a large lizard lazily sunning itself on one end of the bench. I approached very slowly so as not to scare it away, barely breathing, sitting down and being very still. The lizard sidled away a bit but remained there, watching me warily from one eye poking out the side of its head, as I in turn watched it, both of us barely moving.

There was something very holy in our silent exchange. I knew I needed to pay deeper attention. I watched the lizard's ability to be still and alert with me there. I could see the tiny movements of its head, its eyes, its tiny lizard claws, the way it just sat and observed, just taking everything in. I could feel my own soft breath, and I tried to tune into the movement of the lizard's breath as I watched its chest rise and fall.

I remembered a time at Plum Village, Thich Nhat Hanh's Buddhist retreat center in France, when I sat very still watching a tiny frog sitting on a large, smooth lotus leaf in the pond. A tiny dewdrop was sparkling on its tiny chest; and every time the frog breathed, the dewdrop sparkled like a diamond flickering in and out through eternity. I could feel this diamond light sparkling in my own heart. I felt it then, and I could feel it now as this moment dissolved into that moment. Perhaps all these moments of holy attention are not really separate moments but a sacred aliveness that is always there. They are moments of interbeing between time and space and species, gifts of grace freely given, if we only have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Prayer Phrase

The kingdom of God is among you (Luke 17:21).

Spiritual Practice

Ordinary Time is a season for waking up to what is already here, to the kingdom of God already among us. Spend time each day breathing in the presence of God wherever you are. Notice how simple interactions, tasks, and relationships are sacred opportunities to share and receive God's love, justice, and peace. Pay attention to the sacred quality of everyday, ordinary life. How is the kingdom of God seeking to be embodied through you each day?

Daily Bread: Friday, 14 June 2019 –

Vickie MacArthur of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

My Love Affair With A Lizard (Part 2)

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not

consist of one member but of many. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. —1 Corinthians 12:12–14, 26–27

Toward the end of our four-day Spiritual Formation retreat, Katie led us in a practice of Ignatian Gospel Contemplation. We read the scripture in Mark where blind Bartimaeus receives his sight. Bartimaeus is sitting by the roadside begging; and when he hears that Jesus is approaching, he begins to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” In the midst of this noisy crowd, Jesus stops and stands still. Speaking directly to Bartimaeus, he asks, “What do you want?” The blind man answers, “Rabbi, I want to see.” Jesus immediately replies, “Go, your faith has healed you.”

We were given time to meditate and journal about our experience with this scripture. I found myself drawn back to my bench by the pond. And there he is, my darling lizard, sitting right in the very center of the bench, head up attentively, tiny claws spread. It’s almost as if he’s been waiting for me. I approach slowly and reverently so as not to scare it away. The lizard sidles off to the side as if to make space for me to sit down.

And so, we sit together once more, the lizard and I. Time seems to stand still again, effortlessly connecting me to a time almost 2,000 years ago. I feel as if this tiny creature is somehow the Christ communicating with me in one of His many myriad forms. I know deep in my soul that I am in the presence of the Holy. I am filled with a love for this lizard that my rational mind cannot explain.

The words of the scripture come back to me and I hear Christ ask, “What do you want?” “To see you” is my immediate heartfelt reply. Christ’s simple words back to me are imprinted into my mind, “See me in all.” I gaze at the lizard, as if seeing with new eyes. I sense the Christ energy in the vibratory aliveness of this lizard. I feel Christ’s love in the trees that seem to reach out with their branches to embrace me. I hear Christ’s voice in the birdsong. Can I learn to see Christ in each person, especially the people I don’t agree with or like? Can I truly learn to see Christ in all?

I slowly walk back for lunch feeling each exquisite step on the ground. It feels like holy ground that is at the same time very ordinary. I feel the gentle breeze like the touch of spirit on my skin. All of my senses are wide open. As I enter the retreat center, it seems very noisy as we “chatter-day saints” tend to be when we’re excited about being together. Yet I am filled with a tender love for every person here. I eat my lunch slowly in silence and watch this beloved community that I am a part of. I see kind smiles. I hear joyful laughter. I see small gestures of care and concern. I see the love of Christ so evident in this community. I smile as I think of my secret love affair with a simple lizard that has helped me to see this. I wonder, in what form Christ will come to me next? “See me in all,” I hear Him whisper as I continue to look with eyes of love.

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