

When we were on retreat at Holy Cross Monastery this year, we used a little book entitled *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life* by Rowan Williams. It's a small book and yet is filled with amazing insight from the former Archbishop of Canterbury. Bishop Laura Ahrens hosts a women clergy book group monthly, and we are also reading this little book one chapter at a time, so we're still reading and discussing it. One of the chapters is entitled "Faith, Hope and Love." In that chapter Williams cites the 16th century Spanish friar St. John of Cross who "sees the human mind as working in three basic ways: the human mind understands, it remembers and it wants."

Williams goes on to say the following. "The human mind is made up of the interaction of understanding, memory and will. The distinctive and fresh insight that St. John of the Cross offers is that if you put together understanding, memory and will with faith, hope and love, you have a perfect picture of where we start and where we finish. In the Christian life, faith (he says) is what happens to our understanding; hope is what happens to our remembering; and love is what happens to our wanting. So to grow as a disciple is to take the journey from understanding into faith, from memory into hope and from will into love."¹

Jesus walked those early disciples through a journey of growth like St. John

¹ Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 21.

of the Cross reflects. He walked them through that journey by being present with them, teaching them, giving them the experience of the many healings Jesus did, showing them his suffering and dying, giving them a new way of living. In the stories we hear throughout the Bible, we learn about human beings moving from understanding into faith, from memory into hope, and from will into love.

Today we hear about the disciples being frightened and huddled behind locked doors. Jesus comes to them and says, “Peace be with you.” (John 20:21). They have a profound experience of the risen Lord with Jesus showing them his hands and his side. Jesus had told them what was to happen to him; they had lived through his death; and now they understand he is alive. Thomas wasn’t there. Even though Thomas’ friends told him what they experienced, he had to see and experience the risen Lord for himself. “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.” (John 20:25). Thomas wasn’t unlike the rest of the disciples when Mary Magdalene came running to tell them on that first Easter morning, “I have seen the Lord,” (John 20:18).

A week later Thomas and the disciples were still behind closed doors, and Jesus comes among them and says, “Peace be with you.” (John 20:26). He doesn’t scold Thomas or give him a lecture about his unbelief. Rather Jesus exhibits patience and love as he invites Thomas to touch his wounds and says, “Do not doubt but believe.” (John 20:27). Thomas proclaims, “My Lord and my God!”

(John 20:28). Thomas makes this journey from understanding into faith, from memory into hope, and from will into love. He grows up as a disciple in that precious moment of encounter with the risen Lord. The early disciples all come to a place of belief from seeing and encountering Jesus, from remembering what Jesus had taught them, from experiencing the love of God in Jesus.

Our Jewish sisters and brothers have celebrated the Passover as we journeyed through Holy Week. Today at sundown they remember Yom HaShoah, which is Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day—the commemoration for the approximately six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust during WWII. In Israel, it's a national memorial day that was inaugurated in 1953. On this same day the Armenian genocide is also remembered—the first genocide of the 20th century during WWI when 1,500,000 Jewish men, women, and children were killed and the remaining 500,000 were expelled from their homeland of Turkey.

To this day there are still people who do not believe these horrific events happened. Even the stories of Holocaust survivors or of Jewish families who lost loved ones are not enough. I will always remember a conversation I had with an Armenian shop owner in Jerusalem who passionately spoke of his father's survival during his Armenian encampment and the loss of most of his family. The names of those who lost their lives in these genocides will be read aloud all around the world to help people remember so that atrocities like these will never again happen. This way of remembering is taking the journey from memory into hope, and we as

Christians join our Jewish sisters and brothers in that journey into hope for a new way of life that honors all people.

I believe Thomas calls us to a profound place of understanding and faith. He shows us what St. John of the Cross writes about. “In the Christian life, faith is what happens to our understanding; hope is what happens to our remembering; and love is what happens to our wanting. So to grow as a disciple is to take the journey from understanding into faith, from memory into hope and from will into love.”

Carry Thomas with you and take his story out into your world. It’s good news and a very human story to tell and a story of love beyond understanding.