

One of our neighbors, who is a professional builder, has been doing major renovations to his own house. For the last 3 years we have been watching in wonder as the former 2-story 3-bedroom colonial blossomed into a 3-story multi-bedroom house with porch and balcony. Transformed definitely describes this property both inside and out! Before beginning the project they had to count the cost—not just monetarily, but in terms of time, disruption to their family’s everyday living, and what that would mean to their relationships. The house is still not completed—its transformation continues.

The challenge Jesus puts to each of us today centers on transformation. This transformation hinges on our freely choosing to let go of what we were doing or being in order to live into and embrace the path God calls us to walk now. In the gospel when Jesus says to follow me you have to “turn your back on” or in other translations “hate” your loved ones, scripture commentaries tell us that the translation falls short of its Semitic language meaning. A better translation is “be detached” – “let go.” Jesus wants us to continue to love our family and be responsible in our use of possessions but not cling to them possessively or allow them to rule us. Freely letting go is in itself a radical path to walk and one that will propel us into a more radical walk with God. I believe that discipleship—following Jesus—is a call to authenticity. It is about continual transformation, becoming who we really are, and then being and doing that with radical love.

Here are a couple examples of traveling this path.

A couple weeks ago while hiking on a mountain in Vermont known as Camels Hump, Stan and I walked partway with a young woman Heather. She had worked as a teacher in a few different towns in Vermont and recently moved to Norwich, Vermont to begin a new position. These different teaching jobs broadened her experience and built up her skills. Although

traveling this dynamic path has been a positive adventure, it has also brought lots of changes and some discomfort as she adjusts once again to new circumstances. She said to us on the trail: “You know how some days you just need to be someplace you know? That’s why I chose this Camels Hump trail.” In her displacement Heather had a need for “home,” for familiarity and knowing. She let go, detached herself from the anxieties and pressures of starting a new school year to become refreshed and come home to her true self in nature. I don’t know whether she realized how profound her statement was, but I do know it touched me to the core. She felt a desire within herself to live out her need to connect, and by doing so she touched me deeply. She reminded me that a key part of discipleship is placing ourselves, as we are, at the service of others wherever we are on the “trail.” She also reminded me that during moments when we’re being stretched and perhaps coming ever closer to our authentic self, there often is a need to feel the comfort of home—the presence of loved one or a beloved place, the sound of a special song, or an activity that grounds us. I probably will never see Heather again, but I know I met God, my real home, through Heather’s discipleship—through her letting go of anxiety and through her radical love for the children she teaches and the trail she calls home.

As a personal addendum to that story, I *love* hiking trails and find it rejuvenating and healing. There I’m able to totally detach from life’s commitments. This letting go opens me to listen to the heartbeat of the mountain, with its rocks, water, trees, and animals. The adventure and oneness that occurs with each step and every climb transforms my spirit and allows me to touch into my true self. Hiking is part of my discipleship and helps me follow my call as priest and fellow disciple in our community and beyond.

Another example centers around the discipleship of our cousin and the life changes she is undergoing. She is brilliant—she was a surgeon and ER physician for many years, then worked

at a veterinary hospital, and most recently pastored a small Methodist congregation. With each job change she needed to let go of work that was important to her and embrace the new path ahead. She also has cared for special needs cats and has shown these cats radical love for many years. Now at a crossroads she is unemployed, faces severe financial challenges, and needs to let go of a beloved, 3-generation homestead and some of her beloved cats to have a sustainable future. Although brilliant, she also feels hopeless. Her hopelessness can be transformed, but it makes the path of transformation even more challenging. I believe this painful path can only be walked with radical love—her radical love and the radical love of those of us who are helping her. *This call* to discipleship is really challenging me right now. (“Can you see the sweat pouring off me? Where’s the bucket!?”) Today’s reading from Wisdom reminds us to discern the ways of God. In this case the right decisions well-discerned are very hard ones. Living these is the tough part of discipleship. Yet in the midst of the hard decisions there is also a soft part to discipleship—enfleshing care and hope to her in her hopelessness. As Stan took her hands in his and assured her we care, I felt God’s hands joining us; it was a transforming moment. As this path of discipleship unfolds, more transformation awaits—for all of us.

Each of us in whatever path we are walking is called to be who we really are and love radically. I urge you to stand with courage in your commitment to discipleship. Count the cost of radical love and discern God’s ways carefully.

Live the adventure of radical love. Come home to your True Self. And be transformed.

*Scripture Readings—23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time*  
Wisdom 9: 13-18b  
Philomen 9-10, 12-17  
Luke 14: 25-33