

## **Conclusions:**

### **The Spirituality of the Blood – Our Commitment Now**

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Where to begin? Perhaps it is best to begin at the beginning! Let us go back to Genesis (Beginnings) where the story says it all started. Our stories tell us who we are, how we got here, why we are here and ask us what we are going to do now? We have many stories of creation—but we tend to concentrate on one or two...and we tend to forget that they are stories—not fact and certainly not necessarily the way things are supposed to be, or stay that way. Our stories allow us to experience the knowledge and wisdom that has gone before us—when we tell the stories—they happen to us. The first rule of storytelling is: All stories are true and some of them actually happened—and when the storyteller says: “Once upon a time”—this story will happen to you—to all of us. We know the first story because we hear it at the beginning of the Easter Vigil every year—

IN THE BEGINNING WHEN GOD WAS CREATING THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH...THE EARTH WAS A FORMLESS AND EMPTY VOID. DARKNESS COVERED THE SURFACE OF THE DEEP (THE FACE OF THE DEEP) AND A MIGHTY ROARING WIND FROM GOD WAS SWEEPING OVER THE WATER—AND GOD SAID: ‘LET THERE BE LIGHT!’ AND THERE WAS LIGHT. GOD SAW THAT THE LIGHT WAS GOOD AND GOD SEPARATED OUT THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS. GOD CALLED/NAMED THE LIGHT DAY, AND THE DARKNESS HE CALLED NIGHT. AND THERE WAS EVENING AND MORNING FOLLOWED...IT WAS A FIRST DAY. (Genesis 1:1-3)

This is the first story...but historically, in reality it is a fairly new story—around the 8<sup>th</sup> century before Jesus. It was written by the priests when the people returned—a remnant came back, from their long exile in Babylon as slaves. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed, the Temple was burned, the leaders and priests and wealthy were killed and the people were forced marched into Babylon as slaves. When Cyrus allows them to come back home, many stay in Babylon because they have prospered over the decades/years. But a few return—to a land burned, pillaged, crops and fields gone to seed and nothing—no temple or great city. They must start over again and begin anew. So the story is about their new creation—and how good everything is that their God who is the God of life, always faithful creates—including them—men and women, human beings who are very good. We know the description of what it means to be created, to be human beings.

AND GOD SAID, ‘LET US MAKE ADAMA (HUMAN BEINGS) IN OUR IMAGE, AFTER OUR LIKENESS. THEY SHALL RULE THE FISH OF THE SEA, THE BIRDS OF THE SKY, THE CATTLE, THE WHOLE EARTH, AND ALL THE CREEPING

THINGS THAT CREEP ON THE EARTH. AND GOD CREATED ADAMA (THE HUMAN BEING) IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD THE HUMAN WAS CREATED: MALE AND FEMALE THEY WERE CREATED...AND GOD BLESSED THEM. [Genesis 1:26-27]

There is a play on the words Adam and the word 'very'—they have the same letters in Hebrew, just arranged different. Adam/human beings are very good—capable of giving great delight to God—it was God's great pleasure and good will to create us and this says something about God! And we are told at the end of day six that God saw all God had made and found it very good. And then there is the 7<sup>th</sup> day—the day that is holy and sacred to the Lord—why? Because God stopped working and blessed the day and declared it holy—just as God's word had made all things and blessed them. And God contemplates the work, appreciates it, delights in it—so that it can continue to expand, grow, mature, differentiate, separate, and be good! And this is what we are to become—in the image of God—those who stop working, appreciate all the earth and its creatures, take great delight in it—and let it rest, as God rests, as we rest. [Contemplation is a long loving look at reality, alone and with others—and often a long loving look at reality that is hard to look at too.]

This story is a theological and liturgical story—that reminds us of what we were made to be. And there is another story, found in chapters 2 and 3...the first story is how the heavens and the earth was made and this second story is how the earth and the heavens came to be—and it is a 'why does this do this?' story--why are humans/earthlings farmers? Why is water so important? Why do men leave their parents and bond with women? Why are men and women different from all the animals and yet profoundly equal to one another and intimate with one another? The earthling (made of water, mud and God's own breath (air) is put in a garden to care for it, protect it and cultivate it and told that if he EATS of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, then one day, he will surely die.

The earthling (male) looks for someone like himself and can't find anyone in creation. God creates a female from bone and God's own breath and God builds up the woman (like one would build a ship or an ark) and brings the woman to the man—they are both earthlings. We are told at the end of chapter 2 that they are both naked and yet they know no shame. What this means is that they are not yet human beings. Human beings are different from the rest of creation because of a number of things—first they are made in the image and likeness of God (whereas all else reveals something of God). They are give free will—they can make decisions and then live with the consequences. They can decide whether or not to be like God—or to not be like God. And this is where the story continues—these two are equal—earthlings, but not human beings—they are not conscious of themselves as persons individually. They are not conscious of the other as different. They have made no choices. This 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter is not another story—but the continuation of how we become human beings.

The story continues: the command was given to the earthling man, but obviously he passes it onto the woman—but the command has changed—who changed it—Adam? Now the

command is that: “If you even touch the tree, let alone eat of the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you will die.” And the woman earthling is told: no, you will not die—you will be like gods, your eyes will be opened and you will know what is good and what is bad. We are already made in the image and likeness of God—but to be human beings, we must know good and know evil. The woman sees a number of things: that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes and most important of all: “desirable for gaining wisdom”. Wisdom is the gift of seeing as God sees! And so, because of food, because of beauty, and because of wisdom—she takes the fruit and eats and shares it with Adam and he eats. And “then the eyes of both were opened, and they realized they were naked.” [Gen 3:4-7]

And this is also where the story is not only told, but it is interpreted in ways that contradict everything we have been told about God the Creator and the earth/sky/creatures and human beings in the first chapter of the Bible. Rather than seeing this as what makes us human beings and what is a story that sought to explain why there is suffering in the world; why women suffer and die in childbirth; why men toil on the earth and the earth that was given as a garden resists man’s labors; why men rule over women; and lastly why human beings die. The description of the end of this chapter contradicts everything that is good—very good.

What is the essence of being human—it is being human, needing food. It is being human, appreciating (like God) beauty) and it is being made in the image and likeness of God—seeking, desiring and reaching for wisdom. This is the first choice—it oversteps a boundary and the price for being human, fully human is also dying. Until this point, the man and woman earthlings are not human—now their eyes are opened and they are human beings. They see—as God sees. They know what is good and what is bad. They see themselves and each other as separate [separating out is part of the first story—and then naming—and now there is Adam and Eve [mother of the living].]

The story predates Judaism by hundreds of years—an old story woven into the text to talk about present reality—but the reality first presented is true also—all that is made is good. But the reality is that only God lives forever—to be human, though created in the image and likeness of God, is to seek wisdom—to know God and be known by God—it is also to die. This is a consequence of free will. But not to choose—would mean that the earthlings would never become human beings. And it is here that the first story is often ignored or set aside and the second story is broken up into two stories—and it’s called the fall of man—instead of the story of how we become human beings. And the interpretations of the story begin to contradict the story.

It is called the first sin, the original sin—of the human race, but woman committed it, seduced the man and the whole human race ‘fell’. And yet the word ‘sin’ is never used—it is about knowing what is good and bad and living and dying in the image and likeness of God—and the essence of what makes us human beings—reaching for wisdom. [the rest of the Bible is about where to find that wisdom—and it is often connected to the stories, psalms and places of trees]. What about sin—what is the ‘original sin’? The story of the original first sin is found in the next chapter—chapter 4. They are living in the world not an unreal/magical and symbolic

place of a garden. Adam and Eve have given birth to Cain and Abel [and obviously they had daughters as well—since Cain will have a wife, etc.] The two sons have offered sacrifice (handed what they find precious over to God) and God has taken both sacrifices but Abel's has found more favor with God. And Cain is angered. This is what Genesis says:

CAIN GREATLY RESENTED THIS AND WAS CRESTFALLEN. SO THE LORD SAID TO CAIN: 'WHY ARE YOU SO RESENTFUL AND CRESTFALLEN? IF YOU DO WELL, YOU CAN HOLD UP YOUR HEAD; BUT IF NOT, SIN IS A DEMON LURKING [CROUCHING] AT THE DOOR; HIS URGE IS TOWARD YOU, YET YOU CAN BE HIS MASTER. [Genesis 4:4b-7]

And Cain refuses to listen to the Word of God in his heart, and instead turns and kills his brother Abel. The first sin is FRATICIDE! God is the God of Life and life, blood belongs only to God—to know both good and evil as human beings and to choose the bad—is sin. And from this point on, the rest of these first chapters of Genesis is the history of murder/killing/the repetition of the original sin—instead of reaching for food, beauty and wisdom. Without the taking of the fruit—without the breaking of the boundaries there would be no human beings. But the sin is murder—specifically brother killing brother and Abel blood cries out from the earth.

From the beginning the first commandment has been: DO NOT HARM ONE ANOTHER and it develops into DO NOT HARM THE EARTH but the killing has begun. [In the 10 commandments, the first 3 are about God, the 4<sup>th</sup> about family and the 5<sup>th</sup> is the first commandment that includes all human beings is THOU SHALT NOT KILL!

Our God is the God of life and so all interpretations of Scripture, the Word of God must be about life—not death. All life created by God is good and only God can take life. All blood belongs to God (blood is life). There is a Jewish story from the early 11-12 centuries that says:

When God created Adam, he led him around the Garden of Eden and said to him: “Behold my works! See how beautiful they are, how excellent! All that I have created, for your sake did I create it. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy MY world; for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you.” [Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13]

EDEN was a fiction—a garden to express to us what God intended. And we now and have lived in this real world. We are made in the image and likeness of God—the creator, that finds all things good, very good and is intent on sharing the garden/world, protecting it, caring for it, conserving it. We are made in the image of the God of life, all life and only God may take life—it is not our prerogative—to take the life of another, others, even in the world that is not necessary—is sin. And until Noah what is told in Genesis is the story/the his-story of killing.

And with Noah and the ark—a new creation, a new beginning is attempted. Noah brings in all the animals, birds, etc. and preserves and carries them into the future—this is what we are to

do—no matter how terrible the world becomes. But the Jewish tradition tells of Namah, Noah's wife—she collected all the herbs, flowers, grasses of the field, food, tree seeds, etc. and took over a portion of the ark as a green house—or how else could the earth itself be reseeded, planted and made back into a garden—a place for food, for beauty and for seeking wisdom. The covenants that follow—up to the new covenant with Jesus, the beloved child/servant of God the Father in the power of the Spirit—are about renewing life, about remembering and honoring, respecting life—this is the true worship of God.

The prophets come when the covenant is broken/severed—and the prophet is interested in what God is interested in—three things. The prophet is concerned with what constitutes true worship of God; the care of the poor and the coming of God's reign of justice and peace. For us these are often 3 different things/realities—but for the prophet and God there are one woven tightly together. What constitutes true worship of God is care for the poor and care for the poor brings God's reign of justice and peace—and that is the only worship that God wants. It has been so since the beginning—the anawim—the poor are the criteria for whether or not the people of God are being faithful to the covenant and when they are not cared for—protected and given life, then the prophets come: to Denounce, call for Renouncing and then if the people/leaders, especially the king and the priests repent, then the announcement of God's faithfulness and goodness is renewed once again.

And we come to God's New Covenant with us in Jesus. We have heard the story of Jesus' baptism just a week ago. It is also the story of our baptisms. The newness begins with baptism, with resurrection life. We rise from the waters and stand on the earth, our heads in the air, and the Spirit of God comes upon us and we are told by God our Father that we were made to give God delight! We are the dwelling places of the Spirit. We have the same relationship and intimacy with the God the Father, that Jesus has, with Jesus—as servant and child [words are almost interchangeable in the scriptures] by the power of the Spirit. God—the Trinity—embraces us and we dwell now in the covenant of all the earth and sky and water and human beings made one, brought back together again [reconciliation means walking together again] with God.

And today we will hear in the gospel of Luke why Jesus was baptized—and of course, why we are baptized in this new covenant. It is the reading of today's closing liturgy. Let us listen—and take the words to heart.

NOW JESUS RETURNED IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT TO GALILEE FROM HIS BAPTISM, AND NEWS OF HIM SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE REGION. HE TAUGHT IN THEIR SYNAGOGUES AND ALL WERE LOUD IN THEIR PRAISE OF HIM.

AND SO, HE CAME TO NAZARETH, WHERE HE HAD BEEN RAISED, AND ACCORDING TO HIS CUSTOM, HE ENTERED THE SYNAGOGUE ON THE SABBATH. AND WHEN THE TIME CAME FOR THE READING, HE STOOD UP AND WAS HANDED THE SCROLL OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH. AND HE FOUND THE PASSAGE WHERE IT WAS WRITTEN—AND BEGAN.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO PREACH GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM LIBERTY AND (SET) THE CAPTIVES FREE...TO GIVE NEW SIGHT TO THE BLIND; TO LIBERATE THE OPPRESSED AND DECLARE—THIS YEAR WILL BE A YEAR OF FAVOR FROM OUR GOD!

THEN HE ROLLED UP THE SCROLL AND HANDED IT BACK TO THE ATTENDANT AND SAT DOWN. ALL EYES IN THE SYNAGOGUE WERE FIXED ON HIM AND HE BEGAN BY SAYING: 'TODAY THIS SCRIPTURE PASSAGE IS FULFILLED WHEN YOU HEAR IT!' [Luke 4:14-21]

This is the INCARNATION of God in our midst. This is the body and blood of Jesus standing before his community, family, friends, disciples and the world and proclaiming why he became flesh and blood, why he became a human being—why he was baptized—and why we are baptized and what makes us truly human beings in the new covenant that God has made with us in Jesus. The God of Life is now the God of life ever more abundantly for all but especially for those whose lives don't mean much to others; to the poor and oppressed, the prisoners, captives and all those who die without a real chance at life. This is the wisdom of God that human beings reach for—this is what brings the fullness of life.

There are 5 main reasons why we are baptized and how we are to live as human beings. And they follow one upon each other—like 1,2,3,4,5. It is hard to do the 3<sup>rd</sup> thing if you haven't already learned to practice 1 and 2. The first: good news to the poor—food, clean water, shelter, clothing, medicine and health care, dignity, work, education, freedom from fear, security, freedom from violence, freedom of assembly, to practice one's religion, to emigrate, to take refuge in another country—this is where it begins—life ever more abundant for all. The second practice and way of life—to set the prisoners freed, to liberate the captives...literally (let those in prisons and the darkness of despair have another chance at life—this is forgiveness and reconciliation—how many times—7—no, 7 times 77. In other words, stop counting and start practicing, this is a way of life!.

The 3<sup>rd</sup>—give new sight to the blind—those who are blind in the New Testament are those who are hard of heart, and do not listen to the word, and refuse to change—new sight—new wisdom to those who think they are religious but do not practice in relation to others. 4<sup>th</sup> we are to liberate those who are oppressed. The oppressed are those who are poor, live in human misery and others lay the burden of persecution, violence, repression and hatred, etc. on them. And lastly—this year will be a year of favor from our God. Originally this was the Sabbath year—practiced every 7 years. Then it was the Jubilee year, practiced every 7 times 7 years—the 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> years. This year is described in the Holiness Code of Exodus and other books of the bible. It consisted of the following practices that the whole community, all the people of God did together.

1. all debts were cancelled.
2. all the land was taken and re-distributed equally among all the people (so they could at least live and eat)
3. all the prisoners were set free from the jails and those sold into slavery (as many children were so that families could keep their lands) were set free.
4. all aliens, captured slaves and those in war were invited to live in the land, given seed/and a place, or given money to go home.
5. the land itself was to lie fallow, rest—no planting, no harvesting of crops, trees, bushes, etc. All shared the harvest of the previous year and remembered the goodness of God—that all the earth belonged to God.

What is interesting is that study of the time of Jesus and his words in the synagogue reveal that this wasn't a Sabbath year or a jubilee year—it wasn't anywhere near those years. What Jesus is saying is that for his disciples and those who believe in him—EVERY YEAR IS THE SABBATH YEAR! This is the way his community will live. As the Acts of the Apostles and the words of the Didache read: "See how those Christians love one another—there are no poor among them." This is the rule of life for those baptized.

This is where we begin. This is where we begin again—every year after we remember our baptisms. But how do we do this? Why would we do this—in relation to all others, to the poor first and foremost and on behalf of and with the earth and all its creatures and resources. I'd like to tell you two stories that might be a place to begin to look at how we do this. They are both stories about blood—the blood of our bodies, the blood of life, the Blood of the Eucharist, the Body of Christ. The first rule of storytelling is that all stories are true and some of them actually happened. Both of these stories actually happened! And when I begin to tell this story and say: "Once upon a time" ...it will happen to all of you—to us. This first story was told to me by one woman and then I heard it from a number of people in some form within weeks of each other. It is a common experience.

Once upon a time there was a woman who had surgery. She was unconscious a long time and slowly began to come back to consciousness, after hours and hours. She had lost a lot of blood and it had been a dangerous and life-threatening surgery. Her first recollection was COLD. She was so cold. It wasn't a shaking kind of cold, but it was deeper. It was pervasive...from her toes to her head—numbing cold that almost was pain. She ached for warmth. She vaguely remembered that it was summer and she had been sweating when she came into the hospital. Now she felt like she was wrapped in ice. She just lay in the bed and couldn't move, respond, react..anything.

And then she felt something slowly coming into her arm. She had felt pin pricks, but now something was happening. She realized it was blood—a blood transfusion coming into her body so so slowly, dripping into her veins. She realized she could feel the warmth seeping down into her toes, and up into every part of her body. It was, she said, like rising out of the ocean, coming up into the light, air and she was coming back to life again. And then she opened her eyes—there was no one there! But she looked up and saw the bag, nearly empty of

someone else's blood. She saw the clock and realized I am ALIVE. I made it—she wondered—whose blood brought me back? And she learned afterwards that she'd received 4 pints of blood after the surgery. And she had no idea whose blood had brought her back, warmed her and given her life again.

When she told me this it had been weeks since her surgery. She said, she would walk around and look at strangers on the street and think: what I would give to know who shared their life, their blood with me. Their blood is in my veins! There is no way I can thank them—repay them—the only way I can respond is to go and give blood every chance I can.

This is our new covenant—the covenant of the blood of Jesus in the Eucharist—blood given, poured out in his life and in his death and shared with us in his resurrection, gift of the Eucharist, the Word, and the Spirit. We are given the Word of God—the scriptures and we chew on them, share them, and try to make them into our flesh and blood—into practice in our lives. And we know this wisdom must be fed—and so we feast on the Body and Blood of Christ. We have been baptized into the Body of Christ in the water—and that water is bound to the wine of our worship. We know we need the bread and wine, transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ in order to fulfill our baptisms and be faithful to the new covenant. And when we feast upon the Body and Blood of Christ, we become what we eat! And walk out the door as the Bread of justice, the bread of peace, the bread of hope and the wine of salvation, the wine of joy, the wine of freedom for all in the world...and for the world.

[I am so sorry that you are denied the blood of Christ in the Eucharist—practically everywhere else in the world that I travel, the people of God, who are the Body of Christ are fed the bread and the wine together as children and servants at the same table. I am so sorry that women cannot even clean up the dishes, let alone serve the Body of Christ to the community yet in reality it is most often women who plant the seeds, harvest the crops, make the food, serve the food, and clean up afterwards for their families, friends, strangers and those in need—as we have been fed this week].

When we live the Word of God and en flesh that Word in our bodies and lives we give transfusions to the people of the world, the poor and to all who are hungry. Our lives, in covenant with Jesus, in the power of the Spirit for the glory of our Father are meant to be blood transfusions bringing life back into the world, all creation and to human beings. This is what we do—why do we do it? Ah, that is another story. This one is true and also actually happened.

It was in the time of the Vietnam War. There was an orphanage with a couple of hundred children in it nearby a navy base. The nurses and doctors would go on their days off to check the children, give them vitamins, look after their health, play with them, etc. One day there was a bombing, mortar attack that missed the base and hit the orphanage dead on. When the people on the base realized what happened, they ran and got to the orphanage as quickly as they could, bringing equipment etc. that they thought they would need. They quickly began to assess the damage—how many children were dead, badly injured and how many needed to be treated immediately and laid them out on the concrete areas in rows.



And they began to see who needed blood before anything else. There was one little girl maybe 9 years old that was bleeding badly—they stopped the hemorrhaging but needed blood—they didn't dare give her any of theirs—they were Americans/French and she was Vietnamese and the possibility of not being a match was too dangerous. They looked around at all the frightened, white-faced children, shaking in terror still who were standing around watching in horror as they saw those they had lived with dying and writhing in pain. One doctor looked at the children—all about 6 or 7 or 8 and said—will one of you give your blood to this girl? Their eyes were huge and they were terrified. And no one moved. Pleased he begged in Vietnamese—if one of you doesn't give her your blood, she will die. We can't give her any of ours. The children started crying, screaming and trying to run away. But one boy, about 7 stepped forward. He was shaking but he nodded and said yes and stuck out his arm.

They moved quickly, laid him down on the concrete beside the little girl, wrapped a tourniquet around his arm, put the needle in and attached the tube to the little girl—with the needle in her arm. They were tied together and he watched—in fascination and horror too—his blood go from his arm into hers. It went on for 20 or 30 minutes...you could see the little girl stir and she opened her eyes, whimpering and crying. And then he started to cry too. The doctor tried to quiet him, tell him to stay still and not tear the needle out of his arm. He began to shake uncontrollably and weep. Then he was howling and crying. They tried to comfort him but he just didn't respond.

Finally a young Vietnamese woman sat down on the concrete with him, and cradled his head in her lap and stroked his head. She spoke with him in Vietnamese, in his dialect and he began to calm down. The doctor and nurses looked at her and asked—why was he shaking and screaming so—and she looked up at them and said—he thought he was going to die. WHAT they exclaimed—she explained—he saw the blood going out of him and into her and you said that if one of them didn't give their blood to her she would die. So he thought that he would die instead of her. They were stunned. Silent. Finally the doctor said—would you please ask him why he did it, if he thought he was going to die—is this his sister. She asked the boy and he shook his head no. Is she a cousin or a relative? And the boy shook his head no. Then why? And the boy spoke softly to the woman holding him and she smiled and the boy did too. He said: I HAD TO—SHE IS MY FRIEND!

This is why we do it. This is why we seek wisdom, seek life ever more abundantly for everyone, seek to bring life and share it with others and live up to our baptismal promises! This is why we befriend the earth and one another—because GOD HAS BEFRIENDED US IN JESUS' BODY and BLOOD, in the INCARNATION. Jesus says in John's Gospel: I CALL YOU FRIENDS IF YOU DO WHAT I COMMAND YOU!

I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. ...I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and

appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give you. This I command you: love one another. [John 15:11-17]

This is the spirituality of the blood. It makes us the friends of God, friends of the earth and friends to one another. This is why we must live and make sure that the earth is renewed and repaired, released from its bondage and relieved of its burden, along with the poorest of the poor.

Perhaps before we end—a few points where we must begin, now, immediately! These are things we must remember and put into practice NOW.

1. The fate of the earth is bound intimately to the fate of women. Women and the children they bear, bear the brunt and the burden of poverty, and the destruction of the earth. The way we treat the earth reveals the way women are treated, world-wide. Women DID not commit the first sin—the first sin is FRATRACIDE—the killing of brother by brother. What would our world be like if that is taught, and taken responsibility for, instead of blaming it on women because of a story where they, in reality reveal the essence of being human—reaching for food, for beauty and especially for wisdom.
2. This equality between men and women must begin in Church—the Church (institutional structures, not necessarily the Body of Christ the people of God, cannot impact or influence the earth, the world, resources, etc., in any significant way, while it says one thing and yet does not reveal it in practice. Jesus says, also in John at the last supper: “There is so much more I have to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of Truth, he will guide you to all truth.” [John 16:12-13ff] I THINK IT IS TIME NOW—NOT ONLY CAN WE BEAR IT NOW—IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR US TO LISTEN TO THE WISDOM OF WOMEN.
3. There are 1,000,000 (million) heart beats a day in the human body and there are 100,000 miles of blood cells in a human body...this is akin to the rivers of the earth—water in the ground is the blood of the earth and what sustains life. We must begin to look at, reclaim, clean and purify the waters –as we do blood transfusions to pull human beings back from death.
4. The earth is God’s Body, the First Book of Revelation. We are to give reverence to the earth as we do the Book of the Gospels, the Bread and Wine that becomes the Body and Blood of Christ, the poor and the least of our brothers and sisters. What we do to the earth, we do to the poor, to one another and to God.
5. Education is essential—for women, all children, adults who are refugees, immigrants, gypsies, the victims of climate change, colonialization, globalization, militarization. What we need is a ‘globalization of compassion’—along with a shift in economics. Education specifically in basic health care, local production of food, literacy, organizing, self-esteem and protection from violence.
6. The priorities of the Church, of ministry must return to Jesus’ priorities: feed the crowds/masses of people; heal them which means touch them, include them, welcome them, forgive them; teach them the Good News—hope and befriend them—walk with them, as God walks with us in Jesus and the Spirit. The sharing of ‘life ever-more

abundantly' must take priority over doctrine, changes in language, liturgy, condemnation or 'lording it over'—anyone with power in the Church must actually be a servant, and a servant to the servants of God.

7. We must be the presence of Resurrection in the world—so that all can look at us and know what the Good News to the poor is in reality (not in evangelization/preaching, etc.) and what the reign/rein/rain of God looks like here and now—there must be no poor among us...but only the beloved children of God, the friends of God, the Body and Blood of Christ in the world. And we must look on the world as the sacrament of the Spirit—God continuing to reveal both Presence and Truth to all. We must learn to celebrate the world, not condemn it and constantly refer to the after-life.

PRAYER: Beloved God, help us to undo the harm that we have done. To learn Genesis. To protect what is endangered, including people! To stop extinction. To repair the earth, To make covenant once again with all that you have made, sky, earth, water, creatures; and to live so that the generations to come after us—down to the 7<sup>th</sup> generation will know you as the Maker and Keeper of all things, and know your beloved child as the Body and Blood, the food and the drink of life ever more abundantly and your Spirit as the breath of life in us still. AMEN AMEN. Let the people cry AMEN.

Once upon a time, it was long long ago---the sky wasn't like it is now—so high—look! No, the sky was low, the clouds were low...so low that if people stood up straight their heads were in the clouds. It was always wet it seemed. Their hair was soaked, their clothes always damp, never dry. It was only when they collapsed in exhaustion on the ground at night that they were dry it seemed. It had always been like that—people spent most of their lives, bent over, looking at each others' feet—they could tell who was who—who had shoes, or sandals, or barefeet. It was hardest on those who worked the fields, dug ditches, cleaned the houses and courtyards. They sweated all the time—they were outdoors more.

It had been like that and one day, a servant girl, sweeping with her broom in a courtyard was just so tired, so fed up, so weary of being bent over, of trying to dry clothes. Enough (Basta Ya!) She stood up straight in frustration and anger and rage and as she did she swung her broom and whacked the sky, the clouds and hit it again and again and again until she was spent—wore out. She stopped and she looked around—was it her imagination or did the sky move away from her a little bit—did the clouds rise a little? She whacked it again with her broom—and again and again and again. And sure enough, this time it was noticeable...it was slowly, oh so slowly, moving.

She started shouting and whacking away. It took awhile for the other servants to see what she was saying—and doing and they started whacking away—and they were screaming and yelling and soon all the farm laborers, with shovels, hoes, rakes were whacking away. Soon though they were exhausted. She stopped and said, we have to get organized. They all lined up and she started the count: One, two, three, WHACK...one two three WHACK...one two three WHACK and they all moved together. It became a chant and they swayed and moved—they were dancing!

Soon the wealthy were joining them, as they moved up stairs and onto second, third floors—then it was into the trees, up the hills and into the mountains. It was a long slow process, but they did it together and they sang and danced—and rested from their labors. They laid in the sun and laughed and blessed God and ate together and then went back to the work. So you see—they lifted the sky! If they could do that—what will we be remembered for doing?....Together, now...one, two, three WHACK. One, two, three WHACK...dance—Our God dances with us—it is the Incarnation, the Resurrection. It is our hope and our mission...One two three WHACK!!!