



March 2014

2014-1

Solicitude

The Abbots' Letters of Reflection

SOLICITUDE: THE GIFT OF HOSPITALITY

On April 1, 1994 Karen and I purchased the property here in Fredericksburg with a vision to somehow expand our spiritual paths and contribute space or hospitality to those seeking a respite from the daily demands of life. In the early formation of OOOW, I included hospitality in my Rule of Life. In the years that followed, I know my sense of hospitality changed. I opted to wait until after the India trip with the hope I would have something new to share. I must remember to watch what I pray for!

Even so, that first encounter of hospitality can set an atmosphere that will become the foundation of shared time. While in India, we were able to visit a Tibetan refugee camp. We were met by DaWah & Kunchak. Alice Vigil, an OOOW Postulant, had taken Kunchak into her home during a resettlement of Tibetans. Now, we all were able to meet them in their home in India. There is another beautiful story here of blessing and friendship but they must tell that story. As each person stepped off the bus at the Tibetan refugee camp, they were greeted by DaWah with an energy and welcome seldom seen even in the most affectionate families. A beaming smile, a great bear hug and unrestrained energy burst from our host. Soon, we were ushered towards his home, his family, his wife and his mother. You see, we were friends-of-a-friend and were to be cared for with love. I will carry this image with me as a model of humanity reaching out at its best and providing genuine hospitality not to be rivaled anywhere.



Reunion



Lobson-Chodon-Karen Visit



Two Monks cross paths in a Tibetan Temple

After the initial greeting, DaWah continued to aid us in our tour of the refugee camp including the monk's area and their temples. Hospitality became a friendship! The possibilities of hospitality are only the initial stages in the growing awareness of another human spirit; this trip was just beginning to remind me of those possibilities. Hospitality comes from the same root word as "hospital", *a place of healing*, and in this context, hospitality does include healing of the human spirit. On this trip, I was headed for a wake-up call.

A few days later we visited the San Thome Cathedral-Basilica and the tomb of St. Thomas. We arrived during one of the seven Sunday masses, there was standing room only. This was not an English mass but it was clearly a celebration for all those inside. I left early to find a restroom and began a walk across the courtyard. In the middle of the courtyard, there was a beggar who had deformed feet and hands and could only slide his body across the stones. I handed him a few of my small bills and hurried on with barely a pause. A few steps away, I stopped and looked back and was caught in a steady gaze and a head nodding, "Yes." He seemed to be calling to me so I returned and squatted down to be able to look directly into his eyes. I gave him a couple of large bills which he did not even look at or take his eyes off of mine. He just nodded, "Yes" and he touched the very core of my being. I wanted to hug him but just said "thank you" and maybe I saw a smile in return. My memory flashed through the many times I have failed to acknowledge the presence of another human being as I rushed about my seemingly important tasks. Today, he called me to remember how a compassionate response can offer healing. I believe the spirit of Thomas continues to work his spiritual grace in this land of compassion and love. When genuine hospitality leads to compassion, we can possibly reach the goal of "Loving the Stranger".

I know hospitality will be on my revised Rule of Life. I know I will miss opportunities at times to share the real love that can grow from a compassionate response to the needs of others, but I will be called to strive to be awake. Then, I too will love and dance.



St Thomas Church



Child in Worship & Play & Dance
Kapaleeshwarar Temple

A Meditation on Logion 84 ~ Gospel of Thomas

Illuminating the Mysteries. By Diane Walker

Interiors

With time we come to know ourselves and foolishly assume that this

*- our lives, our joys, our despair -
is all we are, and somehow loveable and fair.*

*But when we come to see
the One we always were-
who we were born to be-
that blaze of light illuminates
another face within:*

*So scarred and frightened,
pale and ashamed,
so angry and so bitter...*

Can we embrace and love this, too?

*Or will we,
seeing the beggar by the door,
avert our eyes,
And miss the loving angel at her side?*

On this day, I offer a prayer that each of you may find in your rule of life a growing awareness of the challenges and love that derive from being awake to those special opportunities that come from Loving the Stranger.

Prepared February 14, 2014 ~~ Valentine' Day ~~ with love for each one of you.

Ron Poidevin -- Monk