



Home Connection October 2009

Vocation

Chalice Lightings:

In the flame from this chalice
we find the light of faith,
the glow of hope
and the warmth of service.

May we ever grow in faith, hope, and service
as we kindle our own lights from its spark.

-- Wayne B. Arnason

Let us open ourselves, here, now,
to the process of becoming more whole--
of living more fully,
of giving and forgiving more freely,
of understanding more completely the meaning of our lives here on earth.

-- Timothy D. Haley

Story:

What Are You Doing?

Long ago during the Middle Ages, a traveler came across an area where a large number of men were working on what appeared to be a large construction project. The traveler was curious about what the workers were doing and he approached one of the workers and asked him what he was doing.

The worker replied, "I come each day, and I am told to turn these rough pieces of rock into regular shapes. The work is boring and hard, but I do what I am told."

The traveler walked on and came to another worker who was also working on pieces of rock. "What are you doing?" asked the traveler.

The worker looked up, wiped his brow and looked glad of a chance to catch his breath. "I have wife and children at home. I come here each day and am assigned to work on turning this rock into building stones. It's nothing exciting, but I make enough to feed and clothe my family, so it's worth the work."

The traveler thanked the man for taking the time to talk with him and walked on until he came upon another worker who appeared to be approaching the same task with great enthusiasm. "What are you doing?" asked the traveler.

The man looked up toward the heavens with shining eyes and spread his arms wide. "I'm building a cathedral," he said. And he picked up his hammer and chisel and began enthusiastically chipping away again at the stone.

This story can be found in many places on the Internet and in the book One Hundred Wisdom Stories from Around the World compiled by Margaret Silf under the title *Men at Work*. In most cases the story is cited as old, with the source unknown. One writer says that he has been convinced that the story comes from the Rule of Saint Benedict. You can find several versions on these Web Sites: http://www.anecdote.com.au/archives/2008/07/the_stonecutter.html, <http://qualsys.wordpress.com/2009/04/29/on-vision-and-building-a-cathedral/>, and http://blog.ragan.com/archives/speechblog/2006/08/building_a_cath.html.

Story Questions:

- What is the most important part of the story to you, and why?
- What are you doing? How do you view the work you are doing?
- Is there a difference between what you do on a daily basis, or to make a living, and what you feel called to do? If your calling is different how can you make a place for that in your life?

Possible Activities:

- Interview people about their work. Do they see what they do as a job or a vocation? Do they feel called to what they do? Children can interview their parents and grandparents. Try selecting a variety of people who do the same work and see how their sense of their work differs. Try interviewing a selection of several people who all seem to be enthusiastic about what they do, but who all do different types of work – is there a commonality in how they view what they do?
- Act out the story in this way. If you are in a group, divide the group in two. Give one group a box of blocks or "Lego" bricks. Tell them they have 10 minutes to build something. Give the second group a similar box of building material but this time also include a picture of what you wish them to build. Tell them they need to create the structure in the picture included in the box

in ten minutes. When the time is up, look at the two constructions. Invite the groups to share what it was like to complete the task. Did the group without a picture spend a lot of time trying to figure out what to build? Did they develop their own vision? Did the group that had a picture given to them move quickly because they knew what they were working on? Did the second group find it dull to be working on someone else's idea of what to build? Parents could do this activity with their children by giving them first the box without the picture and then the box with the picture. They can talk about how the experiences were different.

- Children can be encouraged to share what they hope to do in their lives. Encourage them to talk about why they wish to do something in particular. Ask questions like 'Why do you want to be a teacher?' 'What is it about being a fireman that draws you to that job?'

Resources:

Books for Children:

Henry Builds A Cabin, by D. B. Johnson, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.

Henry Works, By D. B. Johnson, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004

Resources for Adults:

Explore the following readings in Singing the Living Tradition published by the Unitarian Universalist Association. (Our hymnal)

419 attributed to Kalidasa

#484 by William Henry Channing

#486 by Dag Hammarskjöld

#488 by Langston Hughes

#502 by W. E. B. DuBois

#560 by Dorothy Day

567 by Marge Piercy

#660 by Henry David Thoreau

Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation Parker J. Palmer, Jossey-Bass, 2000.

The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity, and Caring, Parker J. Palmer, Jossey-Bass, 1999.

The Reinvention of Work: A New Vision of Livelihood for Our Time, Matthew Fox, HarperSanFrancisco, 1994.