

IN NOMINE

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As many of you know, our daughters, son-in-law and Grandson live in Milwaukee.

What you may not know is that a town nearby is called Menominee. Which, for some reason, sticks in my mind like the muppet song of "Menomenah."

do, doo, da doo doo.

However, in one of the videos of the song, it ends with the two crusty old men, Statler and Waldorf, sitting in the opera balcony seats, looking at each other. At one point, one of the men speaks and says, "The question is: What's a Menomenah?" The other man pauses, and says, "The question is: Who cares?"

As many of you know, the Episcopal Church has historically been small in numbers, but strong in influence. We've been well placed. We have been the Church that leaders around the Country have looked to for guidance and wisdom. Our voice in the world was far more influential than our numbers implied.

Many are afraid that the strength, influence and presence of the Episcopal Church has been relegated to the question of the second man: "Who cares?"

I have to say:

I care!

I believe you care!

I believe that the people sitting in our pews care!

And more importantly, I do believe that God cares!

God cares a great deal about our Church!

And, to get quite personal, I do believe that God cares about the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of West Virginia!

But I think the next question we ask is "What is it that you really care about?"

For while God cares about us...I dare say that God cares about different things than we do.

God wants us to care about different things.

God's dream always takes us 'out there.' God cares about making a difference. God cares about what we care about. Making the right choices.

The Collect for today reads, "Grant us not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure..."

In Peter Seller's last movie, *Being There*, Sellers plays a classic English manservant who has lived all his life in the townhouse of an old wealthy man in Washington, DC. Other than gardening, his knowledge is based only on what he has seen on television. For him, reality is what passes for life on TV.

He is totally detached from reality...but in the movie, the irony of this ignorance of real life, is mistaken by people for deep and thoughtful wisdom.

He ultimately is sought out as an advisor to the President, and is hunted by the financial world for his keen insight.

He is totally detached, and yet perceived to be fully engaged.

There are some people...and you may know some yourselves...who appear to be both totally involved in life, yet somehow free of its many entanglements. It seems to appear when we see people who are living the 'simpler life.'

They seem to be focused on different things - they march to a different drummer - they walk on a different plane - they hear a different voice than the one we often hear.

We too are called to look elsewhere.

We are called to let go.

We are called to trust (probably the hardest thing in this earthly life.)

Too often, we reverse the collect,

"Grant us not to be anxious about heavenly things, but to love things earthly; and even now, while we are placed among things that are passing away, to hold fast to all of them..."

In our lives, we are too often tied to our earthly lives

We are often:

- too concerned with our possessions

- our cars
- our homes
- our chalices and vestments
- our church buildings
- paying the gas bills

Instead, I believe that God wants us to care about the heavenly things:

- salvation
- love
- eternal life
- forgiveness of sins
- feeding those who have no food
- clothing those who have no clothes
- housing those who have no place to lay their heads this night
- touching Christ

In the 'Tales of a Magic Monastery,' the retreatant writes:

There's a monk there who will never give you advice, but only a question. I was told his questions could be very helpful. I sought him out. "I am a parish priest." I said. "I'm here on retreat. Could you give me a question?"

"Ah, yes," he answered. "My question is, 'What do they need?'"

I came away disappointed. I spent a few hours with the question, writing out answers, but finally, I went back to him.

"Excuse me. Perhaps I didn't make myself clear. Your questions have been somewhat helpful, but I wasn't so much interested in thinking about my apostolate during this retreat. Rather, I wanted to think seriously about my own spiritual life. Could you give me a question for my own spiritual life?"

"Ah, I see. Then my question is.....'What do they REALLY need?'"

Ultimately, the question is not, "What do I need, or what do I want?"

But what does Christ want?

What do they REALLY need?

Disciples are handmade one relationship at a time.

For it is not about us.

It is not about you

It is not about me

It is about God...and now

We set our eyes on Christ

We serve Christ by serving others - OTHERS

And responding to the question: What do they REALLY need?

Amen.