

A counter vortex to every vortex
The Rev. Dr. Martha Tucker
February 10,2019

Blessed be God who animates our lives and calls us out of darkness, emptiness and desolation to living deeply meaningful lives of abundance and light. AMEN

For every vortex there is a countervortex. This was the advice given by my wise spiritual director.

Of course, I did not know what a vortex was...it sounded bad like a crisis given the context.

And I needed to know what one was, given the direction I was being asked to resume.

We had come to a critical point in the road, in my journey with Christ; there was something which seemed to be not of God yet tugging on me. I thought and wanted Christ to be my magnet!

What would the counter vortex to this chaos be she asked: I immediately pictured the rocky coast of Maine with dotted islands, Christmas trees jutting to heaven everywhere and everchanging water. I always seemed to see God there in the expanse and magnificence and Beauty! I felt I was at the edge of the world we know gazing into raw peace. I could feel my faith in high relief in the midst of such Beauty!

A vortex is defined as a mass of air or water which behaves as a rapidly spinning whirlpool and pulls or sucks bodies and objects with extraordinary power!

So the countervortex.is not just opposite but somehow is an energy or situation working against or nullifying the power of the vortex perhaps with power of its own.

I often think of 9/11 and its aftermath as a national vortex. The darkness, the terrorism, the death, the destruction, ...the FEAR...were forces which were set in motion and were sucking the life out of us, until we individually and collectively asked the question and searched for a counter vortex...a counter force.

people of all religions realized the countervortex, which though taking different forms, was love, the power of divine love which penetrated boundaries.

God was everywhere when we turned from the fear and the dark hole and searched instead for stories of love, compassion and mercy. When we conspired with each other!

We certainly did not need to go much farther than the first responders to begin our counter vortex realization. and when we continued to extricate ourselves from the sucking pull of fear we found ourselves praying with and among those affected, those mourning, those terrified, those seeking hope. God for me seemed to be very near; perhaps because I needed to construct that narrative but more likely because I believe God always shows up in the mess of our lives and tries to gather us and lead us on.

I am also reminded of the Hymn we sang two weeks ago as we honored Cassie Latimer: Precious Lord Take my Hand Lead Me On Help me Stand I am Tired I am

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Weak I am Lone. Through the Storm Through the Night Lead Me On to the Light Take my Hand Precious Lord Lead Me Home

Whatever dark vortex we encounter, God leads us to the counter vortex of Light.

When we extend our hand or throw up our arms or reach for God either physically or metaphorically, we are met with grace. Caught by grace. enveloped in grace.

It is important to remember that the counter vortex may be just as strong just as powerful as any negative inclination.

The process by which God extracts us from the vortex and sets us on an enlightened path is one of discernment. This process is at the heart of the call stories in our lives. Not just calls to vocation but calls which come as answers to our problems or crises. The key to this process, besides realizing it is a process and not a moment in time, is listening and awareness. We must open ourselves to the Word of God and shed ourselves of expectations and words which are not of God.

Today's lectionary offers us two call stories: God to Isaiah and Jesus to Simon. The images created and the motivations seem to fit into this vortex/ countervortex trajectory.

Today we have two vortices offered: Isaiah's circumstances in the year of the death of King Ussiah and Simon's fishing debacle; danger and failure on the high seas...

The counter vortex for both is God and the power of God's call. The counter vortex is meaningful call to God's work.

Isaiah laments his circumstances: Woe is me I am a man of unclean lips who lives among a people of unclean lips.

For Isaiah in the reaching into Isaiah's vortex by God's mere hem...a hem fills the vortex and acts as a life preserver to save Isaiah from his circumstances and call him to a fuller life with God as a prophet! Here I AM Lord! Send me!

The power of just God's hem reminds me of the power which came out of Jesus when the woman dared touch his garment. the power to transform. Imagine the power of the whole robe!!!

Simon, a fisherman, has met with empty nets. he is discouraged.

And for Simon the counter vortex might be Jesus' full presence offering the timeless spiritual direction: cast your nets into the deep. Casting his nets into the deep realizes not only an abundant catch but a new faith to respond to Jesus call to follow and fish for people.

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Hems and nets cast deeply, more deeply than imagined, result in a divine power to call Isaiah and Simon to their fullest selves. God does the same for us. It is the process of formation.

The basis of our prayer and the shape of our journey to the cross is one of God showing us the way out of oppression out of injustice.

If the vortices of our lives are violence, poverty and hunger; addiction, depression and mental illness, then the counter vortices are compassion, generosity, abundance and mercy. To call these antidotes fails to embrace the continuum and the process of sanctification. God's grace is not momentary or randomly offered; God's grace is abundant and complete and INFINITE!

One of the interesting things to me is that we have been talking up to this point about individuals, but institutions, churches, too, experience vortexes. They lose their way.

We are about to gather together as a community for an annual meeting. It is an extension really of this gathering for it is supported by holy communion and worship of the Creator of all that is!

We will be beginning a new year together and we have much to celebrate. We also have challenges ahead.

The thing I have come to know and love about Christ Church and all of you is your love for each other, for this community, and for God. Our very mission statement attests to the process of discerning and living our best lives with God's help. Becoming one with God and sharing the Gospel with others is already to have answered God's call and to be on a path toward light and love. Like Isaiah we may have experienced the power of God reaching deep into our lives and calling us. Like Simon we may have heard that still small voice to cast our nets more deeply...to go deeper into our faith journey.

It is my hope that you already know the counter vortex and are being sucked into that divine cosmic space. It is also my hope that we as a Christian community will continue to say: Here I Am Lord...Send me Use me to thy purpose!