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STEWARDSHIP OF LIFE: A JOURNEY OF FAITH

"In him we live and move and have our being." Acts 17:28 ESV

The focus of my life and work is ministry to the poor and those tyrannized by injustice. It flows out of Eucharistic worship and the Bible. Taking the mystical Body and Blood of Christ and listening to the Scriptures carries me into the world in the name of Christ.

I was born in Kenya, the eldest of the thirteen children. We lived in small hut homestead in West Nyakach of Lower Kadiang'a village. I grew up in Kisumu, Nyanza province, Western Kenya. My dad was a peasant farmer cum a fisher man; my mother was a fish monger (trader). My parents were very poor but we did not know it and I grew up in a home where there was a lot fun and laughter. I grew up in a world of strict hierarchy, tribal with regard to class and religion. I grew up "knowing my place" which was pretty comfortable but rigid niche in society. Christianity was, and is, for me a way of rescue from the social and political rigidness which people are trapped

The gospel for me has a lot to do with the romance of rescue, with the risk of human encounter. My evangelical roots told me that a Christian is one who has not met one. And I have met some distinguished ones. Those who have blessed me and told me that the worst thing I would face in life was inside me and that St. Francis had a head - on collision with the living God and told me that I should be prepared for some knocks. There were others who loved me and a few who let me down (betrayal is too strong a word), but the overwhelming message was being of love. Even today, the absence of generosity on the part of people of faith is the thing that I find most crippling in my work and journey.

The obstacle to my faith has to do with two aspects of life: the inner and the outer, with self-doubt and mean - spiritedness of those who profess and call themselves Christians. My inner obstacles come in the

form of inadequacy and my cowardice in the face of life's challenges. The outer obstacles have to do with the moralism of vindictive religion. On one level, Christianity simply does not work. Its practionares have often betrayed the universal Gospel in favor of some tribal loyalty. On the other hand, I have often been touched by the awe some simplicity of those whose their lives have touched mine. I have been nurtured by the dedicated people of whom I do not know. It is breathtaking.

I was taken to a very evangelical Sunday school not far from home. The pastor was sour man but by Sunday school teacher was one of those "excellent women" whom the Africa inland Church had in abundance. She taught me that Jesus loved me all the way through, no matter what, and my theology can still be summed up in the old chorus(much loved by the great theologian Karl Barth), "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." About the age of seven, I had to what I later came to understand was a primitive mystical experience. I was transfixed by the sight of a beautiful tree and was overcome by what the mystic called "isness" - the wonder of being anything at all and not just nothing. So early on there were all the ingredients of what would be my adult faith: a call to be subversive of structures that imprisons people, a sense of being loved, and a sense of the sacramental - God seeking us out and reaching us through not only the created order but also through that things that happen to us. I was taught that God is always trying to reach us.

My present sense of ministry is still shaped by that early experience - I am moved especially by the power of the Gospel to liberate people from the terrible and enslaving stories that they carry from childhood. I am influence by the writings and character of Herbert Kelly - an Anglican monk who founded the Society of the Sacred Mission. He had a certain attitude or approach to theology and life which, through his writings and the reminiscences of his community brothers. What he stood for taught me about the two strategies of being human - about diversity, tolerance and compassion, and about honesty, adventures and daring. I caught the glimpse of the first from my Sunday school teacher; I got an inkling of the second from the experience of the "isness" of the tree. Laughter is very important agent of subversion. We tend to take our lives too seriously. The monk once summarized their position as "down

with religion and up with God"(Newsletter, Society for the Sacred Mission, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom, November, 1992). Subversive! The second element in the Kelly tradition was the insistence that the opposite of faith isn't doubt. *The opposite of faith is certainty.* Faith was the adventure into the new and the untried.

So the core of my faith is a sense of the ridiculous, a sense of irony (not to be confused with cynicism) a deep wonder at the irresistible power of stories to turn us upside down and make us new. As for the unfolding destiny of the church of the future, the good news is that Christianity hasn't happened yet. It has yet to come into its own. I embrace the vision of the catholic church summed up by James Joyce in the phrase, "Here comes everybody!" I love our Anglican tradition because of its generosity and its ability to live with paradox. It is the one tradition that enables me to call myself a Christian. People have often been disappointed with our Anglican tradition for hanging on to paradox. We Anglicans at our best celebrate intellectual honesty and work for an inclusive community of people in different places with different understanding. We seek to undergird all that we do with laughter and joy. I believe that Anglicanism is a wonderful way to learn what it is to be human. A strategy which if we continue to follow seriously, will attract others. It is truly good news. In short, I trust the church of the future will be marked by freedom, forgiveness and laughter.

Evelyn Underhill, the great Anglican writer on mysticism, and to look at, not much of a revolutionary, wrote: "The real Christian is always a revolutionary, belongs to a new race, and has been given a new name and a new song." Christianity hasn't happened yet and has yet to experience its own message. I wait for, and yet experience daily, the resurrection of the Church. It's a great time to be alive and be aware of God's awesome generosity.