

“And now, O Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in you.” (Psalm 39:7)

Today I want to thank Spirit of Hope for the day of retreat where Carol and I spent a wonderful day in Sedona attending a few Spiritual sessions provided through Spirit Quest Retreats. For the days we were there we camped out along the bank of Oak Creek outside of Sedona and heard the sound of the water running through the creek. Very peaceful. The camps site and the weather were perfect. We had a campfire each night! We were looking forward to seeing the stars but the moon was in FULL mode and made it difficult to see anything up there.

Now, as you know Sedona is a place where all sorts of spiritual beliefs and teachings are shared. It's a New Age type of place where people tend to become “one with the earth.” I have been told this is because concentrated vortex energy is everywhere in Sedona and helps amplify whatever may be needed for spiritual growth. Hey, I'm open up to the idea as God created everything perfectly!

Sedona has been known to help people release stagnating energy, facilitating healing, meditation, and deepening the connection to the Divine. On our Vortex hike we ended up on top of this huge plateau rock that over-looked many of the rock formations in the area. We spent about 30 minutes up there in meditation. ... listening to God... as I like to say. The guide helped us connect with the Earth, the energy, and then focus on self awareness. The intention was that we would leave that session refreshed, renewed, balanced, and in harmony.

While we were up there talking with the guide and getting familiar with the formations, our guide put down a spiritual altar on a large cloth. Then we were given a quartz crystal that was supposed to amplify the energy beneath us. On the cloth he placed several icons representing different spiritual elements such as earth, fire, water, and air. There was a sound bowl, a small Buddha statue, the symbol of the feminine earth and a few other items that seem to help complete the image of the power of the world.

Now, as a Pastor, I could not let the conversation end there. The guide shared with us that he was brought up Catholic but does not practice Catholicism. He is still a Christian believer. So, I challenged him on his altar. I mentioned that there was something missing; something that pulls all those wonderful expressions together. That is the hope that comes from the power of the Christian cross.

He said that the cross is in his heart. “Not good enough”, I thought, so, I started to evangelize for Jesus. So why not a cross in the altar? If we believe in a creator God isn't there the understanding that it is Jesus who died on the cross that allows all parts of creation to have the hope in the balance of happiness and peace? Isn't it the power of the cross that allows us to learn from the wisdom of the Ancient Ones, feel our roots, and make it possible to reconnect once again with Mother Earth?

Oh, how I wished I had one of those pocket crosses with me that the woodworking group in our congregation make. I would have placed it upon his altar right in the middle connecting everything in all creation together as one. He never said anything about maybe putting one there. Well, who knows, maybe the Holy Spirit was working through me that day to remind him that

we are what God has made us – people whom God has created by grace to live in union with Jesus Christ and has prepared to live faithful, fruitful lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our church claims, “By God’s grace we can and do live confidently and generously in this community of faith and in service of others, amid the mysteries and paradoxes of this life in Christ – including our human limitations and failings, and the ambiguities, uncertainties and suffering that we experience.” (ELCA website)

Well, I walked off that plateau feeling refreshed and satisfied that God allowed me to say a few things in my meditation. I still have been meditating on that moment, wondering what I would place upon my altar for the Lord if I had one to place upon the rock. It definitely would have a cross. AMEN