

Off the Reservation

Interim Pastor—Church of the Wilderness,
Stockbridge-Musee Reservation
while commuting from Weyauwega, Wisconsin

NATHAN

by namesake
he is rightfully a prophet
bearer of incriminating testimony

In the Old Testament
He testified to David's
marital infidelity

In the now testament
He confronts his parents daily
with an offense that marital fidelity made possible

For it took a persistent conspiracy
for Kathy and I to daily
exchange a life
for a job

For four and a half years
We maintained the pretense
That a place of employment could be a home

Now this wounded and angry three year old
Reminds us daily
That he made no such deal

That in quitting our job
We quit his life
And he wants it back

And like that Nathan of old
He is right
Much as we might want to make him the problem

And like that parent of old
We can do little more than confess and grieve
As the sin of one generation becomes the scourge of the next

journal

ZEKE

Mary showed her blessed faith
When Gabriel she believed
Promised that which could not be
She waited to receive

But what did faith accomplish?
Did God need a soul so sure?
Would doubt have blocked the miracle
And stopped the perfect cure?

Zechariah gives the answer
For when Gabriel showed his face
Zeke trembled at the glory
but could not buy the Grace

All too certain of his limits
and the limits of his mate
He could not believe a baby
would be showing up so late

So Gabriel struck him speechless
as the consequence of doubt
But only till Zeke named the boy
and then he had to shout

'Bout the mercy of the mighty God
who stoops to save the meek
and won't be long delayed by faith
that shows itself as weak

Now I must admire the virgin's faith
as I wait for Christmas day
But when I'm weak, it's Zeke
who shows God's coming anyway

newsletter

PROGRESS

It happens this time every year
The cycle rolls 'round again
and I rehearse an old sequence
of conflicting emotions

As a child
I dreaded the depressions
and drudgeries of Lent
So I begin by loathing the approach
of such a mawkish and morbid season

Yet I am not able
to give myself entirely
to that innocent negativity
gradually moving on
to more seasoned sentiments

Scripture suggested to an adolescent
That the way of the cross
Could be a road to freedom
A path of liberation
A highway to joy

And I have found as an adult
That sacrifice can be
the unburdening of an encrusted soul
That the darkness of death
can be a light to guide my life

I work through this progression
fresh each year
refining naiveté into wisdom
and so rediscovering
the goodness of Good Friday
all over again

newsletter

INSTRUCTION

Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

Mark 10:15

I have Nathan on my mind
Only son
Second child

He has
His mother's temper
His father's stubborn streak and
His sister's number

But of all his vices
His honesty and generosity
are the most confounding

He speaks his mind too clearly and
He gives his toys too freely and
We tell him that he doesn't really mean it
When he clearly really does

And even as I teach him
the finer points of
propriety and property
I must occasionally remind myself
of who the teacher is

Such humility is fleeting
but when I hear parents boast
of how easy it is
to break the resistance of a child
It gives me pause

For every child is a parable
a lesson there for learning
and if we master them with ease
If we shape them as we please
We have missed the point of having them at all

newsletter