

Holiness is everywhere.

Now there's a thought.

In the early formative days of the Hebrew nation, in Leviticus 19-20, there is much said about holiness to the Hebrews:

"Be holy as I am Holy" says God.

For the emerging nation, intent on building a new faithful nation, "holy" is an important concept.

The Hebrew word for holiness is "qadash".

It means to be sanctified, consecrated, dedicated and to be separated from the world and worldliness.

For this new nation to grow and succeed it was going to have to remain one among itself, and the Torah reflects all the codes and laws that were meant to achieve this "holy state" of isolation from others and dedication, sanctification to God. We see many of these practices and concepts used today... even in Christianity. Often causing unfortunate outcomes and enormous suffering.

From those early meanings, we maintain the sense of the sanctified or sacred in our own use of the word.

'Doors to holiness are everywhere" Lawrence Kushner says in our "Call to Worship".

Not only are "doors everywhere"

but **assent** - agreeing to God - is always available even in the most unlikely of times and the most unlikely of places. In fact there is no place on earth where holiness, sacredness, the divine do not exist without the presence of God — in other words, nothing exists without the presence of God.

As I have grown in my understanding of God and church; human-constructed dogma and God-given grace my theology has changed; grown I hope. Still, one thing through all of the growth along the any paths I have followed - one thing about God for me that **hasn't changed is that "everything is of God, goddess, creator - and nothing exists without God - because God is in all things.**

Even in all people.

And that presents some challenges.

No easy answers to

- God in war;
- in vicious heartless self-serving leaders;
- in the violent trauma caused by abusers.
- so much more

I have found that over time I find meaning to those questions not by answering the specific questions — but by seeking more about God in meaning and in the places where God, for me, can be seen. That for me is where I need to begin - not from where God is absent - but from where God is.

At times, that takes time. But an assent to God starts with where God is and we go from there...

When we sing together, listen to others sing, it is meant to help us Rise, Shine to that reminder of our Assent...reaching into agreement and renewed dedication to God and God in each other. It is as simple as saying:

- God, I'm here.
- Please help me.
- Show me your will.
- Thank you.
- Thank you for the parking space!
- Or the silence that sometimes says it all.

Henri Nouwen who has always been a very important writer for me often centers on this still-ness. The gentleness. The small still voice of "God in Us". The God that delights in us, as Fr. Greg Boyle says, the God who know about time...and how long things take as Teilhard de Chardin reminds us.

The simple message distills itself across all the sacred holy writings:

"Be still. Relax. Know that I am God. Don't be afraid. I am here - with you."

We exchange this all the time with one another -

- in our worshipful lives here and away from here
- in our prayers
- in our greetings
- in our Passing of the Peace of Christ

Much as Jesus said to his disciples, we say to one another, from the holy place inside, the assent we have made, the deep small voice, the gentle heart and the silence that speaks in the expression of touch:

"My peace I give you, my peace I leave you...not as the world does, but as God has given me to share with you.

"Namaste"

It is a dimensional thing, a dimensional understanding that reveals God as the greatest unknowable dimension of all.

A dimension outside of our own visible one, yet within us that we can at best know - and only so much, for its greatness and light is too great and bright to share.

It is God and doors to God everywhere. It is "the Holy"

With that innately present mystery in each of us --

Is it any wonder that we call out to God from our dimension for help?

Isiah and others in their assent and holiness spoke into that "dimension of God" that they could at best petition and know in their own ways.

In the midst of much trial and suffering, Isaiah reminded the Hebrews to begin with where you have found God, not in God's absence or the unmet demands they would make of God for an end to suffering - NOW!

Think of All Yahweh has done for us, the good things, the compassion, the kindness. Remember first this God and go from there.

And we have. And we still are.

We sing of it and will again in "Love grows here" - not its opposite. If there is no other reason to be here - that is enough. To be in a place where love grows on the journey we share.

We all have experienced loss and grief and we still come here and find joy, compassion, kindness.

And right up until the very last book of the New Testament in the Canon, The Book of Revelation - it continues in the same way.

God is leading us to a "New Jerusalem" and "New Dimension"; a time when the gradual efforts toward peace and justice and the end of suffering will be gained. With a difference...

The writers of the time embraced an eschatological view of things, that there would be an end time -- a destruction -- before the next dimension.

We, have over time acknowledged the fragility of the world we live in, but we (most of us) continue to work for the "New Jerusalem" without total destruction. Even the Ukrainians in their battles, as destruction reigns around them from a despicable despot...there is one thing that will not be destroyed. Their spirit, their determination, their sacredness as a people. And that is holy in ways we will never ever quite understand, but there is God with them, too.

As we come to this morning's table, we enter this dimension of holy and sacred and assent to God. We come as a witness to one another and the world that there is still vast and powerful meaning in this table and the one whose teachings we follow - and the one who follows with us into the world and this New Year. It is another of the messages we carry,

New Year is always about a recognition of what we have each day — a new beginning in our daily journey of assent to the sacred and living with the presence of God and eternity in our lives in ways that support the plan.

Shana Tova - "Happy New Year"

It is the Covenant; it's all there. We have written the assent, we have established the holiness in our lives together and the path we follow. It flows from one dimension to the other, from one day to the next -- to today.

the words and sing them. We print and share them. We use them as a way to describe ourselves to others in what it means to be a member and it is how we enter into the world, based on the assent we make each day.

Shana Tova - a reminder that each day is sacred, too, and that while the past has not always been the kindest, it is the past and a new day rises and shines upon us. And the sacred is here with us. Emmanuel.