

## THIS I BELIEVE

Thank you for being here today. When Beth asked me to do this, I realized with the constant state of busy-ness with family and work that I am not contemplating my existence so much as noticing how the “energy of action” makes good things happen.

I do know why I come to a place like this church though.

A favorite quote of mine refers to people gathering together. I sought myself, I could not see..I sought my God, God eluded me, I sought my tribe, I found all three. Now why would finding a tribe make things work?

I believe each of us is a piece of life’s ongoing pattern.. and that with respect, goodwill and work, when we put our pieces together, we can create great things.

Ellen has quoted this bumper sticker. “ Life’s a symphony, play your part.”

So there it is: I feel that call to do my part, to create something.

It doesn’t mean I have to play every single minute. I should have quiet time, always a challenge (for me). It means be present, engage when it’s your turn, harmonize .. create something good.

About this creating thing.. Do I need to be thanking a somebody or something?

Now we’re onto a quite different topic. So I’ll just say flat out, I couldn’t tell you if there is or isn’t the God as described by the Catholic Church . For me any concept of God has to have a male and female side. I’m not ducking the issue. I just don’t dwell on, because it is not something that can be proven or disproved and I look around and see that one’s religious beliefs come from your life experience. Planet-wide it seems that way to me. I do notice that all religions honor some concept of the “Golden Rule”. *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

.. So now I return to playing my part and it seems I should be putting my energy to something that actually serves humanity and to our interdependent web of life. If there is a God-force, what I can call a higher power, that good force would be pleased with that.

There was an earlier time when I thought more on religious beliefs. I can share what I’ve kept and what I’ve left.

I grew up in the 70's in a small Minnesota farm town, a religious mixture of Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists and Presbyterians. Prairie Home Companion wasn't that far off the mark. Cold weather and good teachers made for intellectual conversation even in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Religion was not as important getting a good education and being a productive person. You should know right from wrong, (which would be the golden rule), don't break the law, your bright future is out there and you should find it.

I came from a family of nine children, six girls and three boys. We're all energetic and opinionated. The boys were the bookends. The girls are in the middle, and I am 2<sup>nd</sup> from the top. I understood a little earlier about how diverse females are and, along with my mother, understood that we were no longer living in the world she grew up in. A little anecdote here. She understood about religious rules that no longer make sense. Being a catholic, she found herself under the Vatican's somewhat unpopular, often ignored rule of 'No birth control allowed'. She already had nine children..and so one day, when I walked into her bedroom and saw her taking a pill, I asked her "Mom, is that a birth control pill?" She said "Yup. If the Pope wants me to have more children, he better be ready to come babysit." She also approved of using birth control if you were going to be sexually active, which was very bright and gracious given her catholic fears.

Four in my family are still Catholic and, one has become a West Virginia Evangelical – she's always up for a fight, with comments like "The pope is the anti-Christ". Two don't go to any church and used to face regular judgement by the evangelical and two of the remaining four Catholics. Anything goes wrong and it's:

"Well, they should have been going to church, never should have left the church".

So, from a family counselor's point of view, it's the usual diversity, alliances, and goofy affections you see in a big families.

I am still an unknown.. they're still not sure what this Unitarian thing is. But as my family gets on with us at weddings and funerals, I guess they're accepting.

Sometimes I sense an uncomfortable feeling on their part that they they're supposed to get me back in the correct religious box, don't be thinking about meditation, Hinduism, about that Tai Chi stuff, or that Darwin guy. But actually they've calmed down a lot.

Returning to what I believe though, I am grateful for these things from my childhood experience:

I believe the 10 commandments are good.. they expand on the golden rule, Do unto others as you would have done unto you.

I believe that there is change in the religious order itself.

There was a minor war between the old nuns who wore the mysterious habits, and the new ones who had been in the civil rights marches and wore the short habits. So by 7<sup>th</sup> grade I realized even these folks with in the convent wall have differences of opinion.

What else I am grateful for is the creativity and wisdom in the story telling of our religious books. Consider these three: The Red-Sea parting which saves the slaves and drowns the oppressors, the angels singing on high to celebrate a newborn baby, Krishna defeating evil. The stories are beloved but address another belief I have:

That good will triumph over evil.

Friedrich *Nietzsche* was a German *philosopher* of the late 19th century who challenged the foundations of Christianity. He was not a fan of the idea that the more you suffer the better you are.. This is his quote: “The pain of grief runs deep it’s true, but joy runs deeper still, for joy desire eternity, profound eternity.”

We want good to go on and for pain to end. Even if we can’t stop evil we will turn our backs on it, and even if we can’t create the good, we will shelter it and help it along. This is about problem solving.

I am thrilled by the creativity and progress of the human spirit.

I believe we are meant to put our puzzle pieces together and make good things happen. I am going to do a show and tell, to remind us of just how much creativity we have. Show the object.

A life-long challenge, a very important skill, is to sort out the phony stuff and dead-ends, from the real things that are a part of what serves humanity and our fantastic eco-system, our interdependent web of life.

Most of you know that our CVUU group has been given a seed gift of \$1000 to go for a solar PV System. Here’s the slogan: Making our eco-system better, one electron at a time.

I hope together we can make good things happen. Thank you.

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