

Augustana College  
Chapel of Reconciliation

Ann Pederson

10 September 2008

Texts:

1. Samsung Olympic theme: ***“Where determination connects with passion, imagination lives.”***

2. Ecclesiastes: 7 Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is **now** that God favors what you do. 8 Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. 9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun— all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. **10 *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave,<sup>[c]</sup> where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.***

24 A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his or her work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, 25 for without God, who can eat or find enjoyment? 13 That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. 19 Humanity’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath<sup>[b]</sup>; humans have no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. 20 All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. 21 Who knows if the spirit of a human rises upward and if the spirit of the animal<sup>[c]</sup> goes down into the earth?" 22 So I saw that there is nothing better for people than to **enjoy their work, because that is their lot.**

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Who would have thought that Samsung and Ecclesiastes could be brought together as sermon texts? A precedent was set last year by President Oliver and his use of Saturn’s motto for Augustana College . . . . “Like always, like never before.” Like “it’s a great day to be a Viking,” we have the mantra: Augie: Like always, like never before.

This summer as I watched the Olympics, I kept hearing the following advertisement from Samsung: “Where determination connects with passion,

imagination lives.” Maybe you remember the ads. I thought that this secular ad sounds like the texts just read from the wisdom book of Ecclesiastes: “**10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, <sup>[c]</sup> where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.**” And as the book of Ecclesiastes adds, which is most important addition of all: this is the gift of God, to love your work and to enjoy life. The gift of God to us at Augustana College is to connect our passion with determination, and let our imaginations soar. The gift of God for each of us: to do what we are called to do with all our might, and to find enjoyment and love. Otherwise, all is vanity, all is meaningless. I have thought a lot about this as I have watched friends and loved ones either die from terminal illnesses or be diagnosed with them. What is the point of life? To find joy in life.

Let me share with you three vignettes about folks who have taught me how to live in the joy of the God-given moment, and to connect my life’s passions with determination so that God’s imagination can live in me.

1. **Misty May-Treanor and Carrie Walsh:** The Passion of the Olympics. This dance of the Olympic volleyball looks simple and yet behind it is the workaday passion of playing “with all their might.” Treanor and Walsh know that without error and failure, success will never come. And that Olympic style grace is built on practice. We succeed because we know we can and must fail. To students: if you don’t fail occasionally in college, you haven’t learned a thing. I try to be proud of the fact that I flunked the first tests in my chosen major in college!! To “play with all your might,” and to find joy in the every day practice can a metaphor for our faith: God’s gracious gift of love enables us to run the race of faith—we are not alone, but joined with a cloud of witnesses, and with the assurance that God’s grace precedes it all.

2. **Wilfrid and Byron:** Passion of the canine companions.

I just put our eleven year old Airedale Terrier “to sleep” this last spring. Named after a Benedictine monk at St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota, Wilfrid was an incorrigible terrier. I also found out that St. Wilfrid was the Bishop of York who helped to defeat Celtic Christianity in 664 CE during the Synod of Whitby. Airedale Terriers were first bred in Yorkshire England, near the River Aire. Arthur Peacocke, famous for his work in religion and science, reminded me that my terrier’s

obdurate personality probably coincided with the qualities of his ancient British namesake. Several years ago at a conference at St. John's University, Dawn Adams, native Choctaw and paleontologist, decided that Wilfrid might be an appropriate spiritual director for me. As a companion species, he might just have enough insight about play and rest to teach me about sabbatical, love of life, and my kinship with all of God's critters. So, as one named after a Benedictine monk to one being deemed worthy as a spiritual director, I learned a great deal from this woolly, wiry, Airedale Terrier. We were, indeed, companion species intertwined in God's fantastically wild creation.

And now I have another new perspective on life this fall thanks to my new canine companion. At five months of age, "Lord Byron" spends his life at a level at which I haven't—close to the ground. So, in order to play with and train him, I have "lowered" myself to his level, where I have rediscovered grass, bugs, sticks, and places to hide. Our vet asked me what I was doing this summer and I replied, "Playing with the puppy." And he said that everyone should have a summer to do that. Puppies have an off and on switch—from play to rest, and they know exactly when to start and stop. That is a lesson that I could learn and so my summer's work was actually its play. Thanks to my new companion, a hybrid of golden retriever and standard poodle. I have no choice, thanks to Byron's puppyhood, but to start and stop, play and work, eat and rest. These are the good rhythms given to all God's critters. Even God played while working and stopped to rest, calling it all "very good indeed." Byron and Wilfrid know how to teach their human companions the joy of life in God's creation.

### **3. Wynona and Willie: friends at Waterford.**

A friend of my mom's named Wynona moved to Waterford about a year ago, after the loss of her husband. On warm summer evenings, she sits out front to watch the flights of the turkey vultures. She said to me one night, as we were all watching the buzzards soar: "If someone had told me a year or so ago, that I'd be out front of an old-folks home enjoying and watching the turkey vultures circle above, I would have told them they were crazy." In her ironic and wonderful way, Wynona finds joy for life, not in spite of, but because of the traumas in her life. Who would have thought that watching vultures could be such fun!! And then there is Willie, a petite woman in her 80's, who walks and walks every day: about six miles or so. Her daughter told her, "If you walk enough, you won't get Alzheimer's." And so she walks, every day, without fail. Her passion for walking is matched by her

wit and sense of humor about life. My mother's senior friends at Waterford remind me: ***“10 whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, and that that there is nothing better for people than to enjoy their work, because that is their lot.”***

***I have learned the way we live our life is the way we'll die, and the way we die will show us how we have lived. Our passion for life is only exceeded by the grace God gives us. So, whatever you do: do it with all your might, and know that where determination connects with passion, imagination lives.”***



Thanks to AG Silver for their music during communion.

## **Blessing and Dismissal**

**Postlude**

*“O Day of Rest and Gladness”*

David Cherwien

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**AG Silver – Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 in the Back Alley -** “Clean Water for Africa Tour” - This Fall, award winning band AG Silver will be partnering with Blood:Water Mission to raise money to dig wells and provide much needed clean water for designated African communities. Blood:Water Mission's current campaign is dedicated to digging 1000 wells in 1000 African communities to provide clean water to areas that are in desperate need of it. Through the initiatives that Blood:Water Mission has in place, \$1 = clean water for 1 African for 1 yr.

## **INVOLVEMENT AND SERVICE**

Forms available today and at the activity fair on September 8. Sign up to receive e-mails about upcoming events!

## **OUTREACH**

Groups of students lead worship and youth retreats across the region. A great way to get acquainted with a smaller group of students of all ages with a modest time commitment! - **Ice Cream Social in the Frosh dorms on Wed., Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>, 7 pm**

## **CATHOLIC MINISTRIES**

There will be a party for all Catholic and ‘catholic friendly’ students on **Wed., Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm**, in the chapel. Meet the new Catholic Ministries coordinator, Shane Wuebben, ‘04 and visit about programming for the year. All are welcome!

## **SERVICE TRAVEL**

**Service** includes local involvement and advocacy and travel to Pine Ridge [fall break], New York City [J-term break] and storm stricken parts of the country through Lutheran Disaster Response [Spring break]. Details at the **travel fair on September 23**; info at the activity fair!

## **This week in chapel:**

Wednesday (10) Outreach Ice Cream Social - Frosh Dorms, 7 pm  
- AG Silver - Back Alley, 9 pm

Friday (12) Worship, 10 am - Al Helbig, Sr. Spkr.

Sunday (14) Worship, 11 am - Beth Singleton, ‘11 preacher

Monday (15<sup>th</sup>) Worship, 10 am - Rich Bowman, Reli.

Tuesday (16<sup>th</sup>) Chair of Moral Values Discussion, 10 am - 3-1 room

Wednesday (17<sup>th</sup>) Holy Communion, 10 am - Pr. Paul