

Augustana College
Chapel of Reconciliation

Footprints of a Pilgrim

Margot Nelson

4 May 2011

John 20:19-23 (New International Version, ©2011)

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

This is the Gospel of our Lord: ...

I have struggled in preparing these remarks--as many of us do when called upon to stand in this place and share reflections that may seem a bit too personal or for which one may even feel, as I told Pastor Paul a week or so ago, like an imposter. The classroom has been my comfort zone—not the pulpit. One area of uncertainty has been what to entitle my remarks. After considering—and dismissing—*My Last Reflection* (too melodramatic, right?) and *All I*

Need to Know I learned at Augustana, (a bit trite and not quite true). I decided that perhaps these random reflections don't need a title-- unless it might be "Footprints of a Pilgrim". Well, let's go with that for now.

Indeed I first came to Augustana as a college freshman, donning my green beanie (for those of you who may remember those days) almost 50 years ago (of course I was 9 years old at the time...). And if there were a way to track my footprints since then, they likely cover most of this college campus—from East Hall to the old stadium somewhere beneath the Humanities parking lot--to the old music building across from the Archeology Lab, to the Old Main recital hall where I gave my first flute recital--to the dual purpose Old Gym and Chapel (now the Edith Mortensen Center), the Library, the Commons, GSC, Bergsaker Hall, and later Solberg Hall.

To clarify, I've not been here continuously since 1962—there have been departures ; but always followed by returnings—first as a parttime clinical faculty member; later as parttime, then fulltime faculty; and again with PhD in hand. As parttime faculty in our younger years, Mary Brendtro and I used to refer to ourselves fondly as parttime peons. I returned after completing my doctorate with every intention of staying just long enough to repay the college for keeping my fulltime tenure track position open for what was likely the longest leave in history. But surprise—surprise, here I am and truly not regretting a moment of it! In fact I feel richly blessed by the privilege of working with students and of knowing and collaborating

with colleagues across this campus and in the area health care facilities.

My (as usual) random reflections became more focused last week as I participated in the Augustana Pilgrimage in honor of our sesquicentennial. It was an extremely moving affair (both physically moving from place to place and also emotionally moving, resonating with my own pilgrimages to and from Augustana). Hats off to Pastor Paul, Janet Blank-Libra, Sandra Looney, Ivan Fuller, and all of the other participants; and condolences to those who missed it! As our band of pilgrims trekked across the campus last Thursday afternoon, we were tracing the paths of many of us (footprints, if you will) and lifting up much of what has been meaningful in my coming to and going from Augustana. In my briefest synopsis, Augustana has provided a sacred space for me for nearly half a century—one that has revealed itself in layers, enabling me to find joy, to touch the beginnings of wisdom, to be fed (intellectually and spiritually), to experience and learn from brokenness, to love a multitude of neighbors, and to live the lessons and surprises of teaching and learning. Some of you will recognize these as a few of last week's pilgrimage themes. Each of them captured something significant for me personally.

With your indulgence, I am going to comment more specifically about some of those themes: **So first...of joy.** Scott Johnson shared a quote at the Service Awards last Wednesday that comes close to capturing my discovery of joy in this place. Here it is: *Hope is the ability to hear the music of the future; faith is the courage to dance to*

it today. What I have gained here, and hopefully shared in some small measure with students and with my younger colleagues is the joy of envisioning a bold and exciting future but, at the same time, reveling in the dance where we are in the present. You may or may not choose to relate this to our collective dreams for new spaces as part of a renovated and expanded Gilbert Science Center. But hearing the music of the future and dancing to it today certainly does relate to our striving for and celebrating excellence and continuing to imagine what is possible.

Of wisdom. The owls, sculpted by artists Palmer Eide and Ogden Dalrymple, near the Commons Building were the site of our reflections about hindsight, insight, and foresight. Such profound concepts...focused on attending, being present, to the messages from our past (hindsight); living fully, deeply, and reflectively in the moment (insight); and discerning what should inform our future (foresight)!

An excerpt from Mary Oliver's poem, *Bone*, reflects this search for wisdom:

*I believe I will never quite know.
Though I play at the edges of knowing,
truly I know
our part is (often) not knowing,
but looking, and touching, and loving...*

Of being fed—I have been fed spiritually by the inspirations of my colleagues and students and by the opportunity to worship as a community; intellectually by the variety of disciplines and perspectives that challenge any temptation I have had to think that everything is about me or about the nursing profession. **Although** I do still contend that nursing is the quintessential liberal arts discipline...because it's about tapping into and using all of who we are as unitary beings connected to each other by the shared air that we breathe and the atoms that flow into and out of us. Wholeness and connectedness, to me are very spiritual concepts, akin to grace; they are not choices, but they simply are. We do not choose to be whole or connected, but we may choose whether or not to acknowledge that wholeness and connectedness—within ourselves, with others, and with our God. Echoing Jesus' invocation to the disciples (perhaps His pilgrims?), "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you," I have felt summoned—and sent--to live out my connectedness with others in my teaching and in my care for people as a nurse.

Of brokenness...our pilgrimage last week acknowledged the history of Steve Thomas's sculptures, at one time standing along the east wall of the Humanities Building, busts of then living Augustana legends J. Earl Lee, Clara Chilson Lee, Ogden Dalrymple, and Earl Mundt, until they were destroyed by vandals in the late 1990s. It was a metaphor for grief, loss, disappointment, and broken spirits—and an opportunity to honor some of the people who have been meaningful in our lives. Brokenness sometimes, of course, leads to

tears. I told Pastor Paul that on a personal level, I have watered the campus with my tears at various points in my life here. Yes, I admit it; I was one of those graduates who wept through graduation because of the endings it represented. I wept at times when students to whom I had been particularly close graduated and when my mentors and colleagues left the college through retirement or transition or death—Margaret Cashman, Nancy Freeman, Kay Luecke, Joyce Nelson, Cheryl Leuning, Martin Brokenleg, Deb Letcher, Mary Brendtro, Muriel Larson...I was a faculty member here, although on a doctoral completion leave, when my mother died. There were tears... through which I have come to learn—and learn again--that brokenness can sometimes pave the way to a clearer sense of connections.

Of loving neighbors...On the pilgrimage, near the Center for Western Studies, words of Chief Seattle were shared by Susan Schrader as well as prayers to the four directions by Karla and Mary Abbott. The web that Chief Seattle referenced has been a very meaningful metaphor for me. The web is at once both delicate and fragile and conversely, strong and resilient. It also illustrates intricate and complex connections. As Chief Seattle said in 1854, **"Man did not weave the web of life - he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."** What a great symbol of connectedness and humility.

One of our last stops was near Gilbert Science Center to ponder the mysteries, the dreams, and the possibilities that intrigue some of our

notable science faculty—Arlen Viste, Jenny Gubbels, Gary Earl, and Karel VanderLugt.

Finally of beginning and endings...since the Service Awards, many people have congratulated me on my retirement, and I have to say that it's a pretty surreal experience. I find myself looking over my shoulder when someone says "I hear that you are retiring", looking around to see who they're talking to. Surely not me—didn't I just get here as the youngest faculty member at the college?

Portions of T.S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*, are particularly appropriate here, some of which were shared by Sandra Looney on our pilgrimage:

*There are three conditions which often look alike
Yet differ completely and flourish in the same hedgerow:
Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment
From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between
them, indifference
Which resembles the others as death resembles
life,...*

*What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from...*

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

To clarify, when I said earlier that Augustana has been a sacred space for me, I didn't mean as a place of refuge, a cloister, or a retreat from the world at large but rather a place where I have discovered the value of connections within its boundaries but more importantly with the community and the larger world beyond.

So...I have left invisible footprints all over this campus, and be assured that you have also left your footprints/imprints/and wonderful surprises on my heart. I look forward to knowing you and Augustana in new ways as each of us is called to new pilgrimages. *Amen*

CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

CAMP COUNSELOR COMMISSIONING SERVICE - There will be a commissioning service to bless summer camp counselors on **Monday, May 9th**. If you and someone you know is planning to work at a camp, please let Carol in the chapel office know.

MIDNIGHT MADNESS - Our Saviors Lutheran, our neighbor across 33rd St., is offering study space and munchies on **Sunday, May 15th and Monday, May 16th, from 6 pm to 1 am!** They will reserve the tables, chairs and study corners of the church building for YOU. Munchies, fruit, and soda will be available. A late meal at 10 pm will be served both nights. **All of it is FREE!!!** Go check it out and burn off some stress in the new gym! WiFi available!!

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Friday (6 th)	Morning Worship, 10 am - Laura Ayres/Chris Haak, Sr. Presenters.
Sunday (8 th)	Morning Worship, 11 am - Kayla Rockwell, '11; Pr. Becca Freeman, Presider
Monday (9 th)	Camp Counselor Commissioning Service, 10 am - Dan Bock; Layne Nelson, Presider; Craig Spencer, Mark Nelson, Hannah Drewes, Sp. Music
Tuesday (10 th)	Koinonia, 10 am
Wednesday (11 th)	Holy Communion, 10 am - Pr. Paul; ASA Inauguration
Friday (13 th)	Morning Worship, 10 am - Rob Green, Sr. Spkr.
Sunday (15 th)	Morning Worship, 11 am - Pr. Paul