

January 18, 2009

## Reflection from John Surette, SJ

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### *People of the Rocks*

**“Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon, the son of John; you will be called Cephas’ – which is translated Peter.”**

**In the Aramaic language, which was the language spoken by Jesus, Peter is a nickname and it means “rock.” I want to share with you a few thoughts about the rock that is Peter and then I want to say something about the rock that is Earth.**

**First, the rock that was Peter...I would say the sacred rock that was Peter. It is clear from reading the Gospels that some 2000 years ago a small group of followers of Jesus of Nazareth, aflame with His teachings and His Spirit, began to live and proclaim a radically new message of good news for the poor. A fisherman whose name was Simon, nicknamed Peter, had been given a position of responsibility by Jesus. Peter wasn't perfect by any means but he was great. He had lots of love in his heart and he allowed that love to unfold within his life and influence the lives of the early Christians.**



## The Well

*A Center for our  
Sacred Unity with God,  
Earth, and One  
Another.*

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**These initial followers of Jesus were all Jews who continued to go to the synagogue and say the Jewish prayers, However, they also gathered in their homes for the breaking of the bread in memory of Jesus as we are doing in this chapel this morning.**

**Over time, this small group of believers expanded to include non-Jews or Gentiles including the Romans. When the Roman Emperor was baptized in Jesus' name, the whole Roman Empire followed suit.**

**Popes were chosen. Priests and deacons were ordained. Churches were constructed and collections were collected. Monasteries and universities were founded. There were ecumenical councils and papal armies. Great saints as well as great sinners emerged within the believing community. Missionaries accompanied the colonizers. The faith took root in North America and here we are this morning, you and I, a result of that historical process that I have ever so briefly outlined. What a miracle!**

**We are 21<sup>st</sup> century followers of Jesus and direct descendents of that disciple, that rock, which was Peter. In each moment of our existence as a believing community Peter is present to us and we are present to him. Our faith is connected to his faith.**

**To fully understand who we are as church with all our successes and our many failures, with all our challenges and many problems, with all our holiness and our many failings, we need to understand our continuity and communion with the rock that was Peter. We are people of that rock!**

**We are also people of the rock that is Earth. I would say the sacred rock that is God's Earth.**

**It has been determined by our scientists that some four and a half billion years ago Earth was a fiery ball of molten rock in the sky in which heavier chemical elements like iron sank into its core while lighter elements floated on its surface, a surface perhaps resembling the lava we observe flowing from present day volcanoes.**

**Over time Earth cooled, an atmosphere formed, and it began to rain. For thousands of years the waters fell as Earth formed its oceans and shaped its continents.**

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**Deep in the ocean during this time chemical processes were giving birth to the awesome mystery of life.**

**At first there were one-celled creatures followed by the multi-celled animals such as jelly fish, worms, fish, insects, green plants, trees, amphibians, reptiles, flowers of all colors, mammals, whales, apes, gorillas, chimps, and the first humans.**

**With the humans there emerged on Earth languages and cultures, philosophies and religions, covered wagons and spacecraft, crayons and computers, songs, dances, poems, prayers, and all of us gathered here in this chapel.**

**All that I have just listed has unfolded, over time, from that fiery ball of molten rock. It is a sacred process. It is how Creation unfolds. Physically we are children of that molten rock. Its atoms are the atoms in you and in me. Our bodies are as old as that rock.**

**Spiritually we are also children of that molten rock. For each moment of our existence it is present to us and we are present to it. Our depths and mystery are intimately connected to the depths and mystery of that rock. To understand our own creativity and spiritual dimension we need to understand the creativity and spiritual dimension of that rock. In fact, we are that molten rock, after four and a half billion years, having become conscious of itself. What a sacred process. What a miracle!**

**To understand fully who we are as humans we need to understand our continuity and communion with the rock that is Earth. We are people of that rock.**

**One more important truth needs to be proclaimed this morning. We are people of the rock that was Peter because we are first and foremost people of the rock that is Earth!**