

PASTOR'S PAGE – JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2011

Musings

The old rushes out and the new waits, poised, to take its place. It is like this every 365 days (366 in a leap year). How many plans have gone awry, and rush out like the dregs that they are. How many will be replaced with updated versions of themselves? How many will be replaced with different plans – some of which will be accomplished, and most of which will go for naught.

It is an ongoing cycle – of life and death and life. And, whether it is a wheel or a loom or a trickling of sand through an hour glass, we are all in the mix somewhere, somehow.

Changes will come this year, most definitely. Big, life altering changes. Small, seemingly inconsequential changes. Come they definitely will. Our task is to analyze them, sort them out, and see how to incorporate them into the ongoing journey.

Hopefully the next time the old rushes out and the new waits, poised, we will be better for the effort.

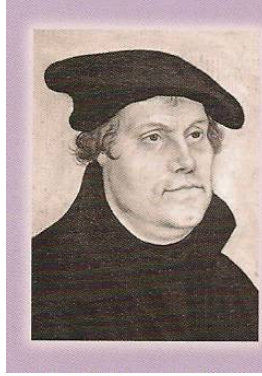
Meditation

I'm still reading (re-reading, after a great deal of time) *Walden*, by Henry David Thoreau. In his section on Higher Laws, he writes the following:

Our whole life is startlingly moral. There is never an instant's truce between virtue and vice. Goodness is the only investment that never fails. In the music of the harp which trembles round the world it is the insisting on this which thrills us. The harp is the travelling patterer for the Universe's Insurance Company, recommending laws, and our little goodness is all the assessment that we pay. Though the youth at last grows indifferent, the laws of the universe are not indifferent, but are forever on the side of the most insensitive. Listen to every zephyr for some reproof, for it is surely there, and he is unfortunate who does not hear it. We cannot touch a string or move a stop but the charming moral transfixes us. Many an irksome noise, go a long way off, is heard as music, a proud sweet satire on the meanness of our lives

40 Day Wisdom

I do not bind myself to such words or syllables, but say my prayers in one fashion today, in another tomorrow, depending upon my mood and feeling. I stay, however, as nearly as I can, with the same general thoughts and ideas. It may happen occasionally that I may get lost among so many ideas in one petition (of the Lord's prayer) that I forego the other six. If such an abundance of good thoughts comes to us we ought to disregard the other petitions, make room for such thoughts, listen in silence, and under no circumstances obstruct them. The Holy Spirit himself preaches here, and one word of his sermon is far better than a thousand of our prayers.



40 Day Journey with Martin Luther

Legends

Ever since I was a boy in Northern Minnesota I have read Native American legends. Some of them are very similar to scripture, some are vastly different. They seek to answer questions, as do our stories. Recently I have decided that I would like to share some of my favorites with you (or at least some that I have read recently that I find to be interesting). This time:

Raven's Great Adventure (Alaska)

Early North American Indians living along the Alaska and North Pacific coast carved the stories of their people on trees, as they had no written language.

They carved strange and beautiful figures, representing people, animals, birds, fish, and supernatural characters, then painted them with bright colors. The tallest red cedar trees were selected for totem poles, and were used for landmarks as well as illustrating the legends told from generation to generation.

On one of these poles was carved a stunning Raven, but he had no beak!

The Raven in Alaska was no ordinary bird. He had remarkable powers and could change into whatever form he wished. He could change from a bird to a man, and could not lonely fly and walk, but could swim underwater as fast as any fish.



One day, Raven took the form of a little, bent-over old man to walk through a forest. He wore a long white beard and walked slowly. After a while, Raven felt hungry. As he thought about this, he came to the edge of the forest near a village on the beach. There, many people were fishing for halibut.

In a flash, Raven thought of a scheme. He dived into the sea and swam to the spot where the fishermen dangled their hooks. Raven gobbled their bait, swimming from one hook to another. Each time Raven stole bait, the fishermen felt a tug on their lines. When the lines were pulled in, there was neither fish nor bait.

But Raven worked his trick once too often. When Houskana, an expert fisherman, felt a

tug, he jerked his line quickly, hooking something heavy. Raven's jaw had caught in the hook! While Houskana tugged on his line, Raven pulled in the opposite direction. Then Raven grabbed hold of some rocks at the bottom of the sea and called, "O rocks, please help me!" But the rocks paid no attention.

Because of his great pain, Raven said to his jaw, "Break off, O jaw, for I am too tired." His jaw obeyed, and it broke off.

Houskana pulled in his line immediately. On his hook was a man's jaw with a long white beard! It looked horrible enough to scare anyone. Houskana and the other fishermen were very frightened, because they thought the jaw might belong to some evil spirit. They picked up their feet and ran as fast as they could to the chief's house.

Raven came out of the water and followed the fishermen. Though he was in great pain for lack of his jaw, no one noticed anything wrong because he covered the lower part of his face with his blanket.

The chief and the people examined the jaw that was hanging on the halibut hook. It was handed from one to another, and finally to Raven, who said, "Oh, this is a wonder to behold!" as he threw back his blanket and replaced his jaw.

Raven performed his magic so quickly that no one had time to see what was happening. As soon as Raven's jaw was firmly in place again, he turned himself into a bird and flew out through the smoke hole of the chief's house. Only then did the people begin to realize it was the trickster Raven who had stolen their bait and been hooked on Houskana's fishing line.

On the totem pole, Raven was carved, not as the old man, but as himself without his beak, reminder of how the old man lost his jaw.

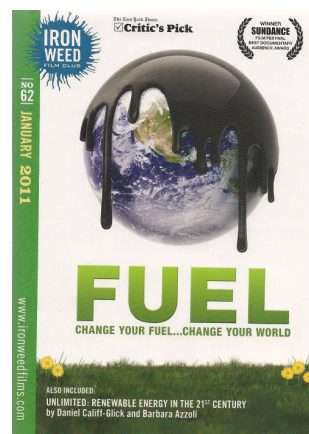
Recommended Radio:

KQKE - 960AM – **Green960 Online and Radio**

A community of progressive political thinkers, featuring nationally syndicated talkers, including local and live news programming and environmental editorial content.

KKSF - 103.7FM -- **(The Band) – Classic Rock**

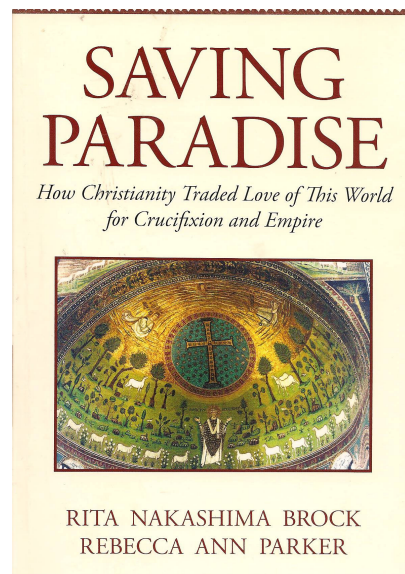
Recommended Movie:



Fuel is a comprehensive and entertaining look at energy in America: a history of where we have been, our present predicament and a solution to our dependence on foreign oil. Rousing and reactionary, **Fuel** is an amazing in-depth personal journey of oil use and abuse as it examines wide-ranging energy solutions other than oil, the faltering US auto and petroleum industries, and the latest stirrings of the American mindset toward alternative energy. Interviews with a wide range of environmentalists, policy makers, educators, and “green” celebrities such as Barbara Boxer, Richard Branson, Sheryl Crow, Woody Harrelson, Robert Kennedy Jr., Willie Nelson, Julia Roberts, and Neil Young, offer serious fuel for thought.

[The Ironweed CD includes a short film: UNLIMITED: Renewable Energy in the 21st Century. This is a documentary about renewable energy and other alternatives to fossil fuels. It highlights a group of passionate 6th graders who call on adults to take action and address global warming. It also includes on-site footage of solar panels, wind turbines, low and zero-emissions vehicles, and tidal generators, in order to show their here-and-now practicality.]

Recommended Book



During their first millennium, Christians filled their sanctuaries with images of Christ as a living presence – as a shepherd, teacher, healer, or an enthroned god. He is serene and surrounded by lush scenes, depictions of this world as paradise. Yet once he appeared as crucified, dying was virtually all Jesus seemed able to do, and paradise disappeared from the earth. *Saving Paradise* turns a fascinating new lens on Christianity, from its first centuries to the present day, asking how its early vision of beauty evolved into a vision of torture, and what changes in society and theology marked that evolution. It also retrieves, for today, a life-affirming Christianity that the world sorely needs.

Brock and Parker, work to recapture the alternative way that Jesus offered to his followers, and which the church seems to have embraced in its early years. They also ask why this call from the Lord went astray, and why we (the church) embraced a path totally foreign to the way which our Lord taught and lived.

If, in only a small way, they enable a few within the modern church to find their journey intersecting the original way of our Lord, this book will have been well worth the writing.

“Saving Paradise” offers eye-opening explorations of the mixture of spiritual vision and myopia that marked many of the great figures of Western Christianity. Its rich text and the additional material in its notes should spur readers to examine both the darkness and the light that can be found in all of us.”

Darrell Turner
National Catholic Reporter

Quote of the Month:

The only greatness for a man is immortality.
James Dean, actor