

5th Sunday after Pentecost

June 23, 2013

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For those of you who don't know me, my name is Brittany Hacker and I've been a member of this church for about 18 years. Obviously I'm not a theological scholar and there's no way I can compare to the great sermons we normally hear, so I won't promise you the best sermon of your life, but I do promise that it will be one of the shortest.

So I'm going to try to talk a little bit about what I do know which is my life and this church. Today's reading from the gospel of Luke talks about a man possessed by demons. While this story shows the man physically tormented by the demons, it made me think about all the demons that we have that have less physical manifestations. Pertinent to my life at the moment, and truly to everyone's life, is the demon that presents itself as fear of change and fear of the unknown.

Metathesiophobia, or fear of change, is what has plagued our society since the beginning of time, as we see in this Bible reading. Fear of departing from the norm and taking the risk of stepping into the unknown. I believe this fear is to blame for the gender inequality, racial inequality and so many other issues existing in the world today. In the U.S., the women's suffrage movement and the civil rights movement required such large "movements" because people are so hesitant to change. We are so complacent with the circumstances of our society that we fear change, even when it means an improvement in our way of living.

At the end of the gospel passage the people of the village ask Jesus to leave. He has just performed a miracle, yet they thanklessly shun him. They would rather stay with the status quo even when it is corrupt. The villagers fear Jesus and ask him to leave because they fear the unknown. They cannot explain what has happened, they are “overcome with fear” because they are in the face of something they have never experienced before. A wonderful thing has happened, a wonderful person has come to their town, and they dismiss him because he symbolizes a change that they are unwilling to face.

Here at Holy Cross I think we have escaped this demon and we have overcome our fear of change, at least a little bit.

To explain what I mean, we have to go through a little history. When I first started coming to Holy Cross, I was just a baby. As Jill said, I am a cradle Holy Crosser. Johnathan Bryan was leading our very small but enthusiastic congregation and was the one who baptized me. The building was half this size and services were held in the parish hall where there was an altar where the current kitchen is. Our old kitchen was converted to a very small closet when the new kitchen was built, which shows how truly tiny it was. Instead of 5 Sunday school classrooms there was essentially just one.

We were happy with the church, but we did not remain complacent, and instead of fearing change we promoted it. We built the larger space that we have today, we moved from leader to leader until we finally found dear old Wes, and today we have a better space, a larger congregation and the church has fully benefitted from the changes that we welcomed.

As I grew up, so did the church. The space grew larger, as I grew taller. We got more windows and chairs and all the while I learned more and more and made connections with the new members of our growing congregation. If we had remained in our one room church, I'm sure many of you wouldn't be here, and what would Holy Cross be then? By taking a leap into the unknown we forever changed for the better. We will always fear change, but we need to accept change and do everything possible to spur change because facing the unknown is the only way to further ourselves.

Going off to UVA this fall, I am faced with the ultimate challenge. I'm going to a new school, with new people, in a new city and I have a completely unknown future. While I am extremely happy here in northern Virginia, I know that if I remain complacent and resist change, I will not be able to grow and improve. When I was little I planned to go to George Mason and live at home because a change as big as moving to UVA seemed unfathomable to me. Fearing change is ingrained in our being, but in facing our fears we are able to further our selves and as a whole further our society.

We should not fear that which we do not know, but rather embrace the challenges that face us ahead. We reject the demons that make us fear. I was baptized and confirmed in this church, I grew up in this church and one of the biggest changes I face will be leaving the church.

Holy Cross helped shape me into who I am today. Besides all the obvious religious lessons, I also learned responsibility from acolyting, I learned to serve others through the Dungannon mission trip and making meals for the homeless, I learned

great patience teaching Sunday school and I learned that Holy Cross is a once in a lifetime type of place.

So to conclude, I am reminded of what we say at the end of each service, (go forth into the world, allelulia allelulia). Each week we are sent out on a mission, to spread the word of God and try to change the world just a little bit. Usually we return again after a week (sometimes a little more), but for me I now go off on a slightly longer journey. I will always remember what I am leaving behind. And I will never forget the people that helped me along the way. (Go forth in the world, allelulia allelulia). Amen.