

Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Father God, Mother Earth

Power Up! Sunday, September 11, 2011

Psalm 139

For it was you who formed my inward parts

You knit me together in my mother's womb...

My frame was not hidden from you,

When I was being made in secret,

Intricately woven in the depths of the earth. (vv. 13, 15)

A favorite movie from my hippie period was Franco Zeffirelli's *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*. The film portrayed St Francis of Assisi as a thirteenth century flower child who fit right in to our "age of Aquarius." The title comes from this famous prayer of the Italian saint:

O most high, almighty, good Lord God, to Thee belong praise, glory, honor and all blessing.

Praised be my Lord God with all his creatures, and especially our brother the sun, who brings us the day and who brings us the light; fair is he and shines with a great splendor; O Lord he signifies to us Thee.

Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon, and for the stars, the which he has set clear and lovely in the heaven.

Praised be my Lord for our sister water, who is very serviceable unto us and humble and precious and clean.

Praised be my Lord for our brother fire, through whom Thou givest us light in the darkness; and he is bright and pleasant and very mighty and strong.

Praised be my Lord for our mother the earth, the which doth sustain us and keep us, and bringeth forth divers fruit, and flowers of many colors, and grass....

Blessed are they who are found walking by thy most holy will.

Praise ye and bless ye the Lord, and give thanks unto him, and serve him with great humility.

On this Power Up! Sunday we celebrate the fact that we are all children of the earth, our mother. We see in today's psalm that the womb in which we were formed is not only our biological mother's, but also our geological mother's. At burials we often quote from the book of Job:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."
(Job 1:21)

And then we say, "Dust to dust. Ashes to ashes." We are connected, all of us children of the earth. We are connected by a common mother (the earth), a common father (our creator God), a common brother (the sun) and a common sister (the moon). We are all kin. We are woven together, each tiny fiber, as part of one great tapestry. With the psalmist we affirm that God knit us together in our mother's womb, as we were being intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

On this Power Up! Sunday we praise the God who gives us life and all things. We honor our common humanity and our common creaturehood as we glorify the God who made it all. We also praise Brother Sun as we use his rays to power our church building. I have been enthralled with the powerful symbols of life around us here on our little holy hill. We have this old church, this 131 year old building, close to the road where the gospel meets the world and the world meets the gospel. Then, behind us is this old cemetery, a graveyard cradling bones that go back two hundred years. (Yes, there are graves of individuals who were born in the late 1700s, the 18th century!)

Then, beyond and now under this old cemetery, is a solar power generating system. On top of our little holy hill are glass and metal panels facing Brother Sun and drawing from him electricity that we now don't have to buy from We energies. In fact, when we are frugal and conservative, as we are known to be, we will produce more energy than we use, and the surplus will be sold to the utility. How very cool is that!

Our little holy hill is Powered Up! Brother Sun shines down on us and we draw from that solar power and use it to heat our air and water, run our lights and fans, our copy machine and stove, and do so with a good, clean, green feeling and providing a model and witness to the rest of the world.

This is not just about saving money on a utility bill each month. It is about doing the right thing and showing others that there is another way, a way of the future, a way to take advantage of the gifts offered by Brother Sun, to use less fossil fuel, and a way to be more gentle and responsible in our relationship with Mother Earth.

The cemetery represents the past, our building and congregation represent the present moment, and the solar system, connecting to the present by running beneath the past, represents the future. In ever new ways, time and eternity meet on this little holy hill.

With St Francis we pray: *Praised be my Lord God with all his creatures, and especially our brother the sun, who brings us the day and who brings us the light; fair is he and shines with a great splendor; O Lord, [Brother Sun] signifies to us Thee.*

We do not worship the sun, we worship the God who made the sun and the moon and the stars and the vast cosmic space in which all stars, planets, moons and asteroids are set spinning. I like that Francis wrote that Brother Sun “signifies to us Thee.” Brother Sun points to the God who made us both, along with Sister Moon and Mother Earth.

The Power Up! Sunday message embraces our teaching ministry here at St Paul’s, as well as our new solar system. Our Sunday school is back up and running and the energy here in this old place is always at a higher level when children and youth are with us.

I sometimes come to summer and breathe a sigh of relief as Sunday school goes on stand by. But by the time September comes around, I miss the vitality of youth that involves some chaos, noise and messiness, yes, but also a power surge that the rest of us need. Our young people are like our solar panels, drawing energy from Brother Sun and converting that to useable power. Our children need faith and our faith needs children.

By the grace of God, this power flows in at least two directions. You grandparents and parents know that kids draw energy from us. They go out the door and we collapse on the sofa like a deflated balloon. But our youth also fill us with power, renew our spirits, make us feel young again, and inspire us to go beyond ourselves.

Some of you have said to me that you appreciate me making our mission trips happen. You acknowledge that it takes work, planning, time, and most

of all, energy. I do not disagree. But I also know that the energy flows in many directions, and I am as empowered by the energy of youth as I am exhausted. It is like the exhaustion that follows a good workout, running or biking or swimming or lifting weights or playing sports. It is an exhaustion that makes you stronger and helps you to bring more energy to the challenges of the next day. It is an exhaustion that contributes to fitness, and (after a period of recovery) more stamina for next time. So God bless Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Mother Earth and all our cousin kids.

Finally, our Power Up! Sunday involves a challenge presented by the Blood Center of Wisconsin. The Blood Center needs 800 donors for Wisconsin's 56 hospitals. The sad fact is that 5% of the population donates blood. Of course, not everyone can do it, but St Paul's has been challenged to find ten new donors who over the next week will call the Blood Center and give a pint. I do it every other month, and have for years. I always feel better after giving blood. Our drive is not here at church but at any Blood Center location in our area. Just call the number on the bulletin and the posters around the church: 877 BE A HERO. Even if you can't donate this week, please call this week for a future appointment, mention the Power Up! Challenge and tell them you are with St Paul's Church.

Our blood, like our youth and the electrical current flowing from our panels, under the cemetery and to the church, gives us the energy to keep going; but the great beauty of it is that it can be shared with others. That's the point of our faith, our many connections to Brother Sun, Sister Moon, and Mother Earth. Stay connected. Share what you

have been given. Love one another, as God in Christ has first loved us.