

The Eighteenth Sunday of Pentecost

October 8, 2006

Genesis 2:18-24

Psalm 8 or 128

Hebrews 2:(1-8) 9-18

Mark 10:2-9

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Have you seen the cross in the Memorial Garden?

It is made from the wood of a huge redwood tree that stood on that spot for years, years of being witness to the life of Christ Church.

The tree saw generations of our parishioners coming and going: it witnessed Christmas services in the dark of midnight with refreshments on the church lawn; Easter Vigil services in the darkness of the pre-dawn hour; stately processions of wooden kings across the lawn in Advent.

The tree saw brides in white with their bridesmaids hurrying to the doors of the church; Bishops in colorful vestments with banners and incense; funerals and many, many committals in that garden.

The tree stood and saw it all.

Maybe it was a symbol of the strength of Christ Church: a tree reaching up to the heavens but firmly rooted in the earth, great roots stretching out in all directions.

A parish with its eyes on the holy, heaven-centered in worship and in its prayers rising to God: a parish of place, this place, reaching out in love and compassion to its neighbors, neighbors in Valdosta, in Georgia, and the world.

How many have been lifted up and assisted by this parish? We will never know. Like the roots of the tree, compassion and love often grow and spread unseen except by those who receive them. That is as it should be.

Some have been given help and encouragement through big programs, national or global; some have received just a smile, a welcome, a random act of kindness from unnamed individuals.

Reaching up and reaching out, that is how trees survive and prosper and grow, drawing strength and nourishment from the sun above and from God's own earth here. Trees must have both. Churches must have both.

With both, a tree can weather the worst of times: the heat; the drought; the winds, changing, bending, stretching; standing; growing; transforming.

A church that knows that its life is of both the heavens and the earth, as this church knows and has always known, is strong, healthy, and growing.

And transforming? Yes indeed. Christ Church is transformed by every new person that worships here, transformed by the gifts, the talents, the questions and the love they bring; Christ Church is transformed by all those it reaches out to, all those it helps.

Christ Church is transformed by your presence here, by the talents that you share so lovingly, and by your gifts. Your gifts flow through Christ Church to its every branch, nourishing its growth, its ministries, and its people.

That great redwood tree isn't gone; it's still there. It's still reaching up and rooted in the soil. Its wood is the wood of the cross. How appropriate.

In His Holy Name.