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SHIELD OF FAITH

"Take Up the Shield of Faith" - Paul

Tuesday July 2, 2019

"Nature — There is delight in the hardy life of the open." — Theodore Roosevelt from an Engraved Granite Tablet on Theodore Roosevelt Island, Washington D. C.

The Hidden Spirit of the Wilderness

The twenty foot tall thick granite tablet on Theodore Roosevelt Island entitled "Nature" continues, "There are no words that can tell the hidden spirit of the wilderness, that can reveal its mystery, its melancholy and its charm."

I've done a bit of reading about one of America's most interesting Presidents, Theodore Roosevelt. Early in life he spent time in Maine. He was sent to the pine tree state to overcome asthma. In the late nineteenth century it was thought that vigorous exercise in the clean air and inspiring surroundings of the wilderness would contribute to recovery from the dread affliction.

It was, perhaps, his time in Island Falls, Maine that inspired his lifelong love for the American wilderness, and living outdoors. He enjoyed working outdoors and overcoming challenges presented by nature. Additionally, he observed, "Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." As a young adult he owned and operated a ranch in South Dakota.

I was honored to spend time this weekend with a man who embodies Roosevelt's ideal in many ways. He was raised by a hard working couple in Lewiston in the late twentieth century. His family had not been long in America, arriving by way of Canada to work in the textile mills.

Paul Madore learned to face and overcome obstacles through faith and hard work. After examining his soul for a call to the Roman Catholic Priesthood he responded positively to God's call to holy matrimony. He married Susan and they raised nine children, who have given them thirty six grandchildren so far.

Over his 70 years he sunk deep roots into Maine culture, into the place. He made it home.

A favorite wilderness destination became the South Arm Campground. This is where Paulie and I joined he and Susan this past weekend. We drunk deeply from the mystery, melancholy and charm of Lower and Upper Richardson lakes. This place has a hidden spirit that drew Paul and Susan back time and again while they were raising their children.

While I like Roosevelt's hidden spirit of the wilderness I love God's cultivated garden more. Mankind gets closest to realizing this ideal through taming nature ... gardening. Maine's Richardson Lakes are actually more an example

Column continues on the back

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of God's garden than Roosevelt's wilderness, truth be told.

Man created these immense freshwater lakes many decades ago using dams. We visited two of them on Saturday in a small aluminum boat that we rented from the campground. The first dam we visited is known as the Middle Dam, the second is called the Upper Dam.

The Middle Dam is old. Made of iron, wood and some cement the engineering marvel is accessible at every point. A narrow iron catwalk provides access to the back of the dam where you can hover like a spirit just feet above the water as it rushes headlong down the sluiceway. You are so close to the foaming whitewater as it roars into rocks beneath the dam that you feel a part of the dam itself. The whole scene from this point on the dam is enlivening and glorious.

The Upper Dam is brand new. It just opened. It is as boring as the feminist hell America is becoming. It is immense and safe. You can't access anything. Where the Middle Dam is engineered with thin iron catwalks to provide access to fisherman and gawkers like me the Upper Dam is all fenced, gated and closed off.

The Middle Dam embodies the low tech makeshift vision of earlier generations of Americans. The Upper Dam is affluence and modernism.

Both dams are an example of Man choosing to cultivate the place where he lives. They are no different from a hoe in a backyard garden. The dams pierced the surface of the earth like the business end of a hoe and the meandering streams overflowed their banks to become the lakes we enjoy today.

The Theodore Roosevelt Island granite monolith cited above continues, "The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets it must turn over to the next generation increased and not impaired in value." It concludes, "Conservation means development as much as it does protection."

This remote place in western Maine is the fulfillment of Roosevelt's vision. It is a compromise between development and protection. Some of the "value" of the place is his "hidden spirit of the wilderness" that reveals its mystery, melancholy and charm.

We can make it more beautiful by continuing our cultivation of this place in our garden called Maine by realizing the idea of hidden spirits is a lens through which we can see God's Holy Spirit. He will guide us to deepening beauty and sublime creations inspired by the Master Gardener, Our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Amen.