

Monday Musing: The Cost of Discipleship
March 5, 2007

It is a real joy for me to welcome you to our new K-O Conference website which will soon be launched. Lisa Kelepolo has created this design for us. She did a great job. I think you will find it easy to navigate and easy on the eyes as well as full of current and timely information. Check it out, www.kocucc.com. There are new graphics, a monthly calendar and a full year calendar of events, documents, camp information, a page for K-O Women's events and a youth page, plus links to the national website. Thank you, Lisa!

I have been waiting for the new website to return to writing weekly Monday Musings. There is no apparent link but in my mind I somehow made a connection. I am glad to return to the discipline of writing again.

The last few days in February several of us gathered with Rev. Frederick Trost at White Memorial Camp. We had a great time of fellowship and an opportunity to meet and greet new friends and old. There was an almost equal balance of men and women and of people from Oklahoma and Kansas. I left thinking of Psalm 133 which begins in this way, "How good and pleasing it is when the people of faith dwell together in harmony."

Fred Trost was my conference minister for many years when I was serving congregations in the Wisconsin Conference. He has been and remains one of my mentors and teachers. It was, therefore, a special joy for me to have this time with a good friend. Fred has a habit of listening to the voices of the ancestors and inviting them into conversation with us. One of the ancestors with whom he visits with some frequency is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. After our retreat, I picked up my old copy of *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan Paperbacks Edition, 1963).

The first chapter, which is entitled, "Costly Grace" served not only to remind me of my days in seminary but also challenged me to think about my own discipleship today. The following paragraph on Luther brought me to a halt. Bonhoeffer wrote, "Luther's return from the cloister to the world was the worst blow the world had suffered since the days of early Christianity. The renunciation he made when he became a monk was child's play compared to that which he had to make when he returned to the world. Now came the frontal assault. The only way to follow Jesus was by living in the world... It was hand-to-hand conflict between the Christian and the world" (pg 51-52).

In a chapter on "The Call to Discipleship," Bonhoeffer asks, "Who is my neighbor?" His answer, "You are the neighbor. Go along and try to be obedient by loving others. Neighborliness is not a quality in other people, it is simply their claim on ourselves. Every moment and every action challenges us to action and obedience" (pg. 86).

Bonhoeffer's study of the Sermon on the Mount is a powerful distillation of deep spiritual truths and insights. Consider this commentary on the passage, "*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*" (italics in the original, pg. 126). Bonhoeffer exegeted this verse in this way. "The followers of Jesus have been called to peace.... They must not only *have* peace but *make* it. And to that end they renounce all violence and tumult. In the cause of Christ nothing is to be gained by such methods... His disciples keep the peace by choosing to endure suffering themselves rather than inflict it on others. They maintain fellowship where others would break it off... and quietly suffer in the face of hatred and wrong. In so doing they overcome evil with good, and establish the peace of God in the midst of a world of war and hate."

Listening to the voices of our ancestors is a humbling experience and also an ennobling one in this Lenten Season.

Grace, Mercy and Peace,
David Hansen