

## Finding Our Way: Contemplation with Land and History

### St. Paul Center for Theology and Prayer, April 2024

- Introduction. Immediate inspiration: Landscape of Slavery at Harvard. Tour informed by a set of spiritual practices with land and body. Dream of Expansion. (New England, your context?) Adrienne Marie Brown Emergent Strategy gives encouragement to incorporate multiple modes, i.e., the academic with narrative, communal and personal.
- Pine Ridge Storytelling  
<https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2013/05/28/pilgrimage-of-trust-taize-community-come-to-pine-ridge-reservation/>
- First 3 weeks with the Desert Tradition- Evagrius' Great Letter to Melania
  - Writing and reading as means of bridging real distance
  - Clue to harmony of the senses
  - Writing holds past into future
  - Hearing/ Listening as reading
  - Earth as the heart, the ground of writing
  - Creation as God's writing to us- a love letter
  - By perceiving creation we may perceive the Divine intent, namely; Love.
  - How do we learn to read that letter?
- Writing meditation

1. My dear Melania, it is known that those who are far from each other because of the distance that separates them (which habitually comes to pass through multiple and manifold causes) want to know or make known one another's desires or hidden secrets, or if they wish to share with each other [things] that not just anyone ought to perceive, but rather (only) spirits accustomed to the possession (of these secrets) - this they do by means of written characters. And [although] far (from one another they are in this way brought) near: and [from] far away they see and are seen; remaining silent they speak and hear; and although perchance sleeping they are awake, for their desires are in fact fulfilled. And [although] sick they are healthy; sitting, they walk. And I

would go so far as to say that even though dead, they live. For **written characters have the power to impart not only things present, but also things past and future.**

2. And this **illustrates the [mutual] harmony of the senses**; for as each manifests its own power it can [simultaneously] take the place of the other. Thus [in writing] the hand takes the place of the tongue, and the eye takes the place of the ear. And paper is the **“earth”[so to speak] of the heart**: it receives the [other’s] wishes sown into the furrows of its lines, together with numerous additional forms of assistance, multiform meanings, differences, and the qualities found in these things, concerning which it is not yet time to speak in particular.

3. And in this **the one entrusted with the written characters rejoices**. I even say that the one who is not entrusted with them (when it is necessary) is helped by the one who has been entrusted with them. This latter profits through seeing, the former through hearing. The advantage of hearing is, indeed, not as great and indispensable as that of seeing. But you are well acquainted with these distinctions.

4. In light of all this, who could possibly be in a position to properly praise the giver of all these gifts, demonstrating as they do above all else the potency, the wisdom, and the love of the giver? For it is clearly evident that he who is widely separated from his friend takes notice of his friend’s will by means of hand and quill and ink and paper, together with the other available materials. On the other hand, one who is close by has need of none of these things: rather he requires either the mouth that word and breath wait upon and that serves ear and heart, or else [he needs] only hand and fingers, that serve eye and heart. But observe that the **true refreshment of him who is separated from his friend is imparted through vision; but for the one who is near, through hearing.**

5. And all of this that takes place by means of written characters is moreover a symbol of what in reality comes to pass for those who are far from God. Namely, what concerns those far from God on account of their detestable works, which have created a separation between them and their creator: so **God has, on account of His love, through the mediation of created things, sent them as written characters by means of his potency and wisdom - that is through his Son and his Spirit - devised (a way) through which those (far from God) may perceive His love for them and be brought near to it [his love].**

6. And it is not only **the love of God the Father that they perceive through created things, but also his potency and his wisdom**. That is, in the same way that one who reads the written characters perceives through their beauty the potency and insight of the hand and fingers that have written them, together with the intention(al design) of their author; in the same way one may **by beholding the creation with understanding, perceive the hand and fingers of its creator, together with his intention(al design) - namely, love.**