

11 March 2009

Dear Carol (I'm copying others this note in order to keep the loop of information open),

Rise passed along your email to me, asking for clarification about the "lay ordination." I'm glad to do that.

The ceremony was quite simple. I provide below for you the one vow I took and the precepts I affirmed. I believe you will find they have nothing whatsoever to do with me joining Buddhism. Indeed, as an Eagle Scout, many of the precepts are quite familiar, as they are with many other secular groups.

Within the ceremony I took one vow: "We vow to save all beings." For me, as a Christian, this meant a recommitment of my baptismal covenant: to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ; to seek and serve Christ in all persons [creatures], loving neighbor as self; and to strive for justice and peace among all people, respecting the dignity of every human being.

There were also "The Three Collective Pure Precepts," I affirmed:

 "Striving to avoid the unwholesome,
 Striving to do the wholesome,
 Striving to benefit all living beings."

Finally, there was an affirmation of "The Ten Grave Prohibitory Precepts":

 "Not taking life
 Not stealing
 Not indulging in sexual greed
 Not speaking falsehood
 Not indulging in intoxicants
 Not discussing the faults of others
 Not praising self or slandering others
 Not begrudging the bestowal of Dharma [wisdom] on anyone
 Not indulging in anger
 Not disparaging the Triple Treasure [the Buddha as a teacher, the wisdom,
 the community]"

I hope this provides some clarity. I am not a Buddhist. I am a Christian who has benefited from being taught the spiritual practice of meditation. The Incarnation, I believe, frees us as Christians to recognize and receive the Holy wherever we encounter it. As Christians, we have felt free to incorporate a non-Christian practice such as the labyrinth, and allow it to become a spiritual practice that deepens our walk in Christ. In the Middle Ages, we adapted non-Christian prayer beads and developed them into our rosary. Meditation, for me, and countless others, is a spiritual practice which deepens my contemplative dwelling in Christ, so that I may say ever more fully – into your hands I commend my Spirit. All Christian spiritual practice, whatever it is, is done for this reason alone.

If you have any questions, please feel free to send an email (kevingtf@gmail.com) or call (906) 360-1915.

In peace,
kevin thew forrester

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