Wendy's November Prayer Thoughts

Cathedrals often display flags of battles in which local people served, and plaques recording the names of those who sadly laid down their lives never to return. There are 44 Anglican Cathedrals in England - 30 in the Canterbury Province, and 14 in the York Province. The worlds oldest is The Oriental Orthodox Cathedral dedicated to The Descent Of The Only Begotten Son of God in Etchmiadzin, the capital of Armenia. Armenia was the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as a state religion. Gregory the Illuminator constructed the first mainly wooden structure, close to the royal palace, between 301 - 3, on the foundations of a pagan temple. He was guided by a vision of Christ descending to earth, hence Etchmiadzin, meaning "The Only Begotten Son Descended here" Its Lantern Dome. Today its lantern dome has carvings from the 12th century. The world's largest Cathedral is the Anglican St John the Divine in New York, which covers an area equivalent to 45 tennis courts. The newest is the Eastern Orthodox National Cathedral of Romania in Bucharest, dedicated to St Andrew. It was opened on 26th of October after 15 years in the building. It contains the largest collection of mosaics in the world, the longest iconostasis, and the heaviest swinging bell.

All Cathedrals have been designed, crafted and built by man. This is open to question. Take a coach trip with me across the Golden Bridge in California to Muir Woods, lying 12 miles north. to enter a Cathedral built by God alone. It stands open for any person to enter and experience deep peace. Until 1904 Muir Woods had been the traditional homeland of the Coast Minuk Indian People whose roots go back 20,000 years. Autumn was important for their staple diet, a time when they collected cones, berries, acorns and other seeds. They were then dried and stored in 8 foot high granaries, made of poles interwoven with brush wood. Every day a portion would be taken and ground into a meal to make a dish similar to porridge.

In 1905 John Kent and his wife bought 611acres of land from the local Tamaipais Water Company to prevent the Redwood trees from logging for the intended building of a reservoir. They donated it to the US Federal Government, and 3 years later on the 9th of January President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Woods as a National Monument. Muir Woods lies in a canyon of Mount Tamaipais which stands at 258 feet/ 79 metres. That's the height of a 23 storey building. It is impossible to photo the tops from ground level. Fossils of Redwoods (Sequoia Sempervirons) can be traced back more than 2 million years to the Jurassic period. The average age of the trees themselves is 800 years, and the oldest at least 1200. It's amazing to know that such giant trees, the tallest in the world, grow from a seed no larger than a tomato seed. The tree canopy gives dappled light making the forest dark. It is also damp with ferns, moss and small plants. I identified Sword Ferns with fronds growing to nearly 6 feet, Sorrel which close their leaves like umbrellas when touched with sunlight, and large white clustered flowers of Hemlock

Coastal fog condenses on the Redwood's soft feathery needles, and drips down to the forest floor to replenish what was lost though evaporation and transpiration. This gives them 40% of their annual water supply. Each day they drink 160 litres. They are remarkably fire resistant. Average yearly rainfall is 40". A fresh water river flows through to the sea and is crossed by bridges. It's another source of water for the roots which penetrate the ground for 13'.....

…….. Roots of the Redwood may also be seen above ground spreading out for 100'. Often roots interlock with their neighbours. Lesser trees grow among them: the Tan Oak, California Bay Laurel, Hazelnut, Douglas Fir, Madrone, Buckeye. Jeremiah gives God's message to the people reminding them of the peace which comes from lives lived in close Communion with Him. "But blessed is the man who trusts me, the woman who sticks with God. They are like trees planted in Eden, putting down roots near the river. Never a worry through the hottest of summers, never dropping a leaf, serene and calm through droughts, bearing fresh fruit every season." 17:8. MSG. Just meditate for a few moments on those words. Then quietly repeat them. God is speaking a promise to you, and giving an invitation. Where is your trust? Where is your fruit? Call out to God in prayer.

The Cathedral is reached after walking well over a mile. Before entering it is important to recall some history. In 1942 in the midst of WW11 with the leadership of President Roosevelt and Churchill 26 countries pledged their governments to continue fighting against the nations of Italy, Germany and Japan. A further 22 signed the draft for which President Roosevelt coined the phrase"United Nations. It was agreed to reconvene in San Francisco when peace was achieved. Sadly Theodore Roosevelt died of a stroke on 12th April 1945, just 10 days before it commenced. On 19th May over 500 delegates took time out to meet in Meir Woods to remember him. A bronze plaque now stands at the entrance to Cathedral Grove. A small stage was set up, and behind it the US Navy Band played for the opening of the reflective unity gathering in the "Natural Temple of Peace", where the Redwoods stand like pillars unable to support themselves, but together they are strong enough to hold each other up. Many were standing when Magna Carta was written. Would that the members of the UN today would accept that they are stronger together, for then they would carry out the ideals of the Charter to promote peace, justice and better living for all mankind. In the quietness (which was requested), the hymn words seemed so relevant. "Drop thy still dews of quietness till all our strivings cease."

Knowing about the man whose name Kent adopted for the Woods, makes Cathedral Grove a truly sacred space. John Muir was born in Dunbar, Scotland. Aged 11 he emigrated with his parents to America. Hs father brought him up to pray and read the Bible every day. He memorised 3 quarters of the OT, and the whole of the NT. He gave his life to studying plants, animals and rocks, which he believed came directly from the hand of God. They were displaying His glory. Much of His life was dedicated to the preservation of forests. His legacy as a conservationist is as the Father of the National Parks. I am sure he would have often prayed Paul's great prayer to the Ephesian believers, where he asks for God to strengthen them with the power of the Holy Spirit deep down for Christ to dwell within. He then explains why. "That you, being rooted and established in love, may have power , together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know his love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." 3: 16-19. NIV.

Lord, saturate us with Your with Your ever flowing love, that our hearts my overflow in constant love for others.