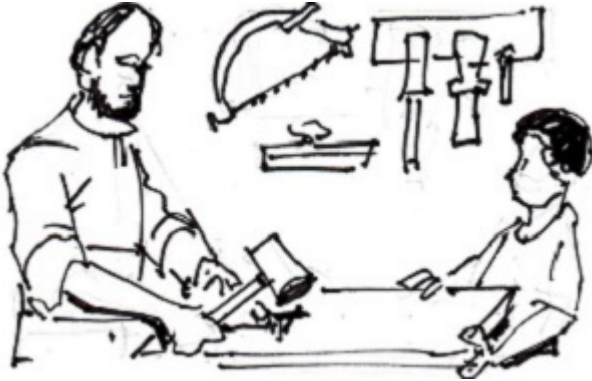


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by Pat Marrin

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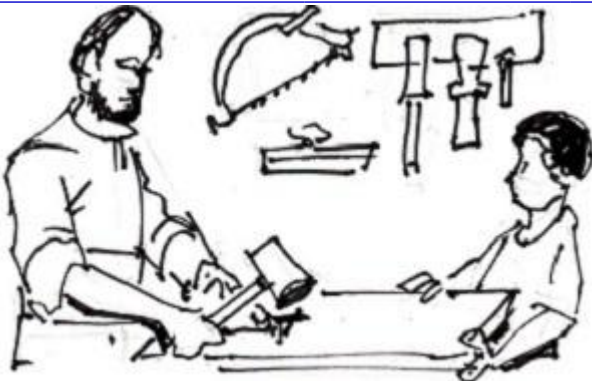
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March 16, 2021

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“My Father is at work until now, so I am at work” (John 5:17).

*Isa 49:8-15; John 5:17-30*

The fourth Gospel has frequent pauses after events and miracles to engage in long discourses. These often take the form of debates between Jesus and his critics, designated as the “Jews,” an odd distinction since all the characters in the narrative are Jewish. Scholars detect here polemics between the early church and rabbinic Judaism later in the first century after the destruction of Jerusalem when the fourth Gospel was likely composed. Today’s Gospel is one of these highly theological debates.

Central to the later rabbinic rejection of Jesus was not just his messianic claim but his intimate identification with God as his “Father,” the basis for the church’s doctrine of the divinity of Jesus. The Father and Jesus are one. When Jesus says that his “works” are not his own but his Father’s, he is identifying himself with the Creator. Many of the healing miracles Jesus performs are acts of creation, like giving sight to the man born blind, or using mud paste to heal the deaf and mute man.

“Like Father, like Son,” Jesus is continuing Creation because he does what he sees the Father doing. He has divine power to give life, revealed later in the raising of Lazarus and, finally, by his own resurrection. Jesus has come to do the will of his Father. This theme will be reflected as Jesus prepares his disciples to perform the same works that he is doing. As the Father sent Jesus, so he sends his disciples. As the Father has loved Jesus, so Jesus loves his disciples, and directs them to love one another as proof that the power emanating from God to Jesus and through the disciples to the world is the power of divine love.

Christian spirituality is, in essence, about sharing in the emanation of saving, creative love. God is at work in us through the Holy Spirit. By our baptism we are incorporated into Jesus as members of his body. We are Christ in the world. Lent is more than a penitential season to focus our faith; it is to prepare us to participate more fully in the mystery of the redemptive mission of Jesus in the world. What is potential in us because of our baptism is meant to be fully activated. Full discipleship is what we are meant to celebrate at Easter.

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