

I enjoyed history so much, that I obtained my BA in history. English history, American history, heck even Canadian history – not only did I like history, I took great pleasure in visiting historical sites.

I was introduced to Upper Canada Village when I was a teacher chaperone on the grade 8-school trip. I would spend more time watching the “animators” ply their craft than the students, and more than once the kids called, “Mr. MacLeod, we’ve got to go!” And if there were no “animators”, there were always signs that I could read.

In planning the family west coast holiday in 1982, I checked out the various historical sites along the way. I had our itinerary all mapped out - Fort William in Thunder Bay; Fort Saint Pierre in Fort Frances, Lower Fort Gary in Winnipeg and I couldn’t miss Fort MacLeod in Alberta. After visiting the first fort, one parent suggested we didn’t have time to visit another one – not even Fort MacLeod.

The summer, following our western road trip, we visited Ottawa once again. A new museum had just opened in Hull, Quebec and I thought the family would enjoy seeing 20,000 years of Canadian human history.

"Oh, no! Not more history!" my family protested the morning I suggested we visit *The Canadian Museum of Civilization*. Why was it, they wondered, that we had to visit and talk about this old stuff. "It's history, your history!"

Part of my history, and maybe some of the people worshipping today was being taught the “3 R’s”. Do you remember what the “3 R’s” are?

The “3 R’s” I remember are ‘*Reading, Riting, and Rithmetic*’. You know that my grandchildren will probably never know those three words, because for them the “3 R’s” are ‘*reduce, reuse, recycle*’. If you have a 3-year-old grandchild, they are probably fans of the ‘Paw Patrol’ character, Rocky, who loves to ‘*reduce, reuse, recycle*’.

But today is Sunday and taking into account what Bob read, the three “R’s” might be ‘*remember, rejoice, rededicate*’. Those three words are important aspects of the Deuteronomy reading.

Before God brought the Israelites into the Promised Land, they were described as "A wandering Aramean ...". The Israelites were wandering in the desert with no home and no clear idea of where they were or who they were to be as a people. These newly freed slaves were totally dependent on God for their present and their future.

The liturgy of presenting the first fruits of the harvest, calls for God's people to remember this heritage. And even more important for them to remember is, that it was God alone who freed them from slavery and brought them to this land "flowing with milk and honey."

If God's people did not remember this history, then they might begin to think that it was because of their own virtue or perhaps even blind luck that they were finally settled in their own land. They might begin to think that their harvest and whatever else they owned belonged solely to them and was for their use and pleasure. They might begin to think that they were the captains of their own future and not indebted to anyone else.

As Christians we have a long history. God has been at work in our world since the beginning of time to draw us close to God and save us from the sin and evil in ourselves and in our broken creation. God is at the center of our history, especially through Jesus Christ who lived and died for us. Every time we confess our creeds together, like we did last week with the Apostle's Creed, we are celebrating that history. Every time we remember our baptisms, we are reclaiming our identity as God's forgiven and beloved children - this is our history.

In this season of Lent, we would do well to remember our identity and celebrate it. Lent helps us focus on what God has done for us, and on our absolute need for the grace of God. We need to do this so that some false story does not obscure who we really are and who we are meant to be. There are plenty of false stories around: rugged individualism (I don't need anybody), consumerism (I am what I own), nationalism (my country is everything), hedonism (whatever feels good is my soul purpose), and whatever else gives us the idea that we are at the center of the universe.

The writer of Deuteronomy calls the people to celebrate the true story of who they are: God's chosen and redeemed people. This remembering and rejoicing leads to renewed dedication and the humble offering of the first fruits of the ground. In this season of Lent, it is good for us to focus on this call for renewed dedication and the offering of what we have been given. When God rescued the Hebrew people from Egypt, when God sent Jesus to the world, when God baptized you and claimed you in Christ, it was to bring you into a close, saving relationship. God loves you. God loves the world in which you live. Let's take time to see this grand picture of salvation and grace. It frames us, our whole life, and all of creation. And then we can respond in thanks and praise.

My daughter is now an adult. She even has thanked me for allowing her to learn some dances from her 'Scottish' heritage. She says that her church experiences put things in perspective for her, helped her make decisions about what to do and what not to do. It still gives her determination to use her life as she believes God intends and as God has made possible. It's good to know one's history.

Your history - our history - is in relationship with God; the One who sent God's own Son to die and rise for us. This is our story, a true story. In this season of Lent, may we be reenergized to give God thanks and to offer our whole selves to God's good purposes.