

A great teacher was renowned for his wisdom and insight. People would travel great distances to meet and talk with him. He was most generous in sharing what he had discerned from his many years of prayer and learning.

One of his students asked him who had been *his* greatest teacher.

The old Sage's surprising response was: **Water.**

Water, he explained, is yielding but all conquering. Water extinguishes fire, or finding itself defeated by flame, escapes as steam and re-forms as Water. Water washes away soft Earth, or, when confronted by Rock, seeks a way around it. Water corrodes Iron until it crumbles to dust; it saturates the atmosphere so that Wind dies. Water gives way to obstacles with deceptive humility, for no power can prevent it from following its destined course to the sea. Water conquers by yielding; it never attacks but always wins the last battle.

The sage said to the student that whoever makes himself or herself like water is distinguished for his/her humility; the student of Water embraces the power of righteousness and the way of peace; the disciple of Water acts from a place of thoughtful stillness and conquers the world. (Adapted from Tao Cheng)

There is truth to that, though the folks who have suffered through hurricanes and tsunamis might disagree. But water is a parable for those who would be a disciple of Jesus: humble in service to others and giving one's self totally and completely to nurture and sustain the tiniest spark of life, ultimately triumph in our conviction of the certainty of the reign of God.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks of himself as "life giving water". The life and death water can bring (through flood and watering of the earth) is why water is the major sign of our baptism. We are to die to ourselves and rise with Christ.

Let us drink from the "water" that is Christ, satisfying our thirst for meaning and purpose, for hope and resurrection, AND let us BECOME water for all who thirst by a world too often parched by strife and division and drained of compassion and justice. God is good...all the time...so let us be good...all the time.