

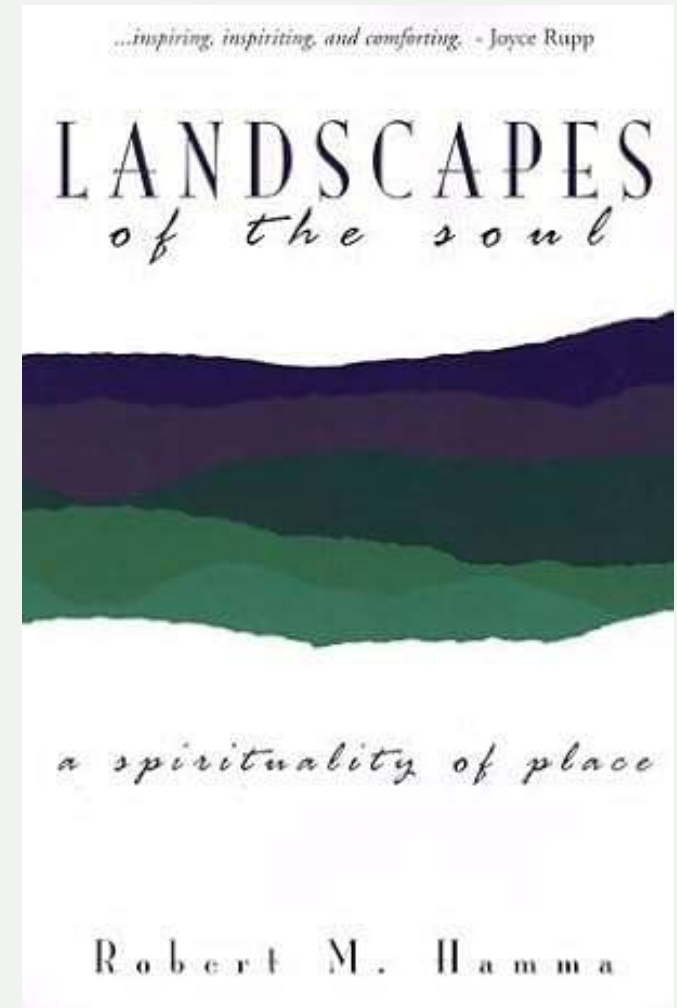


***A SPIRITUALITY OF  
PLACE: THE  
PILGRIM'S JOURNEY  
AND FINDING HOME***

*Steven L. Thomason  
Saint Mark's Cathedral  
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# Selected Bibliography

Frederick Buechner. *The Longing for Home.*  
Robert M. Hamma. *Landscapes of the Soul:  
A Spirituality of Place*  
bell hooks. *Belonging: A Culture of Place*  
Killian Noe. *Finding Our Way Home.*  
Padraig O'Tuama. *In the Shelter: Finding a  
Home in the World.*



## Trajectory of the two-week series

- Place Matters
- Longing for “Sacred” Places
- Caring for Places
- Finding Ourselves in Wilderness Experiences
- Making Pilgrimage
- The Outer/Inner Journey of this Earthly Pilgrimage



# Place Matters

- *“We are born and have our being in a place of memory...”* –bell hooks, [\*Belonging: A Culture of Place\*](#)
- *Place helps us with anamnestic memory which is essential to the spiritual diet*
- *Spiritual exercise—honing the muscles of memory*





# Longing for “Home”

- Our stories are all stories of searching...
- We search to love and to be loved.
- We search to believe in something holy and beautiful and life-transcending
- We search for meaning and purpose
  
- Not Norman Rockwell-ish
- We search for “sacred” places—thin places



# A Sense of Rootlessness

- Modern plight—less connected to the land, more mobile, loss of rhythms and rituals that rooted us (e.g., Candlemas, seasonal foods)
- Immigrants and refugees
- Corporate downsizing, relocations, loss of friendships, loss of place
- *How many places have you lived in your life?*

# Longing as Meaning-making Work of Life

- Longing and belonging share a common root—length of time or space
- Yearning for a long time or for that which is a long way off...
- A place where we feel we belong and that belongs to us
  
- Longing for “home”—aka “homesickness.”
- Can we reimagine “home” as place: “holy and beautiful and life-transcending that will give meaning and purpose to the lives we live.”



# On Holy Ground

- T.S. Eliot—“the still point of the turning world”
- Rudolf Otto—“mysterium tremendum et fascinans
- Mercea Eliade—“the place is never chosen, it is merely discovered...[it] reveals itself.”
  
- Our prayer and practices don’t produce the encounter with God but open us to encounters when and where God chooses (revelations).
- Practice heightens awareness of these places/encounters



# Practicing Presence...

“There is treasure buried in the field of every one of our days, even the bleakest or dullest, and it is our business, as we journey, to keep our eyes peeled for it.”

— Frederick Buechner, [The Longing for Home: Reflections at Midlife](#)





## **Sauntering in the “thin places”**

**Thin places are the locus of:**

- **Revelation (experiential)**
- **Ritual (gestures of approach & awareness)**
- **Remembrance (anamnesis)**
- **Recognition (see the place for what it is)**



# Breakout Groups

Recall a time you discovered you were standing on holy ground.

- How did you know?
- What did you experience?
- Are there any rituals associated with it?
- How did it change you?



# PLENARY CONVERSATION

# Listening to the Land: Place as Part of Ecosystem

- Norman McLean: “Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it.”
- The Web of Life (ala Teilhard):
  - Geosphere (land)
  - Hydrosphere (water)
  - Atmosphere (air)
  - Biosphere (life in all its forms)
  - Noosphere (mind)
- “A taste for existence”



# At Home in the Universe

Sally McFague—the realm of metaphor

The Universe as God's body—

Resurrection is not removal of Christ's body  
but the permanent pledge of God to be with  
us.

The Cosmic Christ becomes the unifying  
origin, center and telos of all Creation





## EXERCISE THIS WEEK

- Select a place, enter into it, be aware of it.
- Use your senses
- Reflect
- Relate
- Value
- Share

# Next Week

- **Caring for Places that Matter to Us**
- **Finding Ourselves in Wilderness Experiences**
- **Making Pilgrimage**
- **The Outer/Inner Journey of this Earthly Pilgrimage**





## Wendell Berry: This Place That You Belong To

It is hard to have hope. It is harder as you grow old,  
for hope must not depend on feeling good  
and there is the dream of loneliness at absolute midnight.  
You also have withdrawn belief in the present reality  
of the future, which surely will surprise us,  
and hope is harder when it cannot come by prediction  
any more than by wishing. But stop dithering.  
The young ask the old to hope. What will you tell them?  
Tell them at least what you say to yourself...

# This Place That You Belong To

Speak to your fellow humans as your place  
has taught you to speak, as it has spoken to you...

Be still and listen to the voices that belong  
to the streambanks and the trees and the open fields.  
There are songs and sayings that belong to this place,  
by which it speaks for itself and no other...

Found your hope, then, on the ground under your feet.  
Your hope of Heaven, let it rest on the ground  
underfoot. Be it lighted by the light that falls  
freely upon it after the darkness of the nights  
and the darkness of our ignorance and madness.  
Let it be lighted also by the light that is within you,  
which is the light of imagination.