

REFLECTIONS

Thoughts on nature and the Christian faith - 3/25/19

"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

- Mt. 16:18



I found this little fern colony growing on the side of a huge boulder in the Hocking Hills region of Ohio. Ferns are among the oldest known things on earth. They have neither seeds nor flowers but reproduce by releasing spores. Yet, they are able to grow where most other things cannot and seem to survive when and where other plants fail. Cockroaches and ferns endure! And so, according to Jesus himself, will the church. It is easy to criticize the church. Does the church harbor hypocrites? Yes. Does the church act at times worse than the world? Yes. And has the church at times promoted violence and hatred in the name of the Lord? Yes. Why are these accusations all true? One reason is that the church is made up of humans, and we humans tend to be sinful. Another reason is that not everyone who attends a church or wears the name Christian is in fact a Christian. There will always be tares among the wheat. So why bother with attending a church at all? First of all, it is in the church that the sons and daughters of Christ are found. The church is, in fact, the chosen bride of Christ. And among the pretenders and hypocrites you will also find some of the best, most humble, most loving people to be found anywhere. They are the ones who have discovered the truth about who they are, who God is, and how sinners can find acceptance before a holy God. They are not perfect, not even close, but they are being slowly changed by the Spirit of God. And in their company you can find what they have found, and be changed into what we were all intended to be. How is it that the church endures? How is it that she grows? In the same way ferns do, by receiving spores from what is mature and by attaching themselves to the rock that will never be moved. Look at this image. These small ferns are growing because they are near to the fern that gave them life. Churches live or die according to how close they stay to the One who gave them life, and how determined they are to stay attached to that rock. - John