

CLAIMING HOPE

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I am a painter and I can't say that I know war or the loss it brings. But as an artist I do know small loses.

Approaching a new sheet of paper always brings the potential for loss or failure along with the hope of success. I have lost a lot of paintings that failed to live up to their potential. Sometimes I can claim them back and other times they are discarded and reclaimed only in small pieces added to a collage along with remnants of other failed pieces.

I have been wondering lately about these failed and reclaimed paintings and how they symbolize hope for me and for the much more serious issues surrounding our world at war. As humans we often don't get it right the first time and we blunder into conflict resulting in failure, loss and true tragedy. I confess that I often rush into my work with the excitement of a new idea. As I paint I might fail to take time to consider composition or balance in my eagerness to apply the paint.

We have certainly watched as our world leaders rushed into their decisions and eagerly committed us to what ultimately failed, taking large parts of the world and its people crashing into the devastating failure of war.

My errors are trite by comparison, mostly a loss of confidence felt only by me. Watercolor is said to be an unforgiving medium and it can be... so I have spent lots of time lamenting my work.

But here is the hopeful part-

(display painting)

About ten years ago I discovered the joy of washing out my paintings and a new hope emerged.

The technique is simple. If one is using a fairly good quality paper, it is possible to immerse the painting in water and gently scrub the surface until most of the paint is removed. What is left is a pale residue of only the most staining pigments.

Forgiveness and a fresh start are mine to claim as a painter. Forgiveness and a fresh start can be claimed by humanity as well. Washing ourselves clean of using conflict as an answer and turning toward peace creates that new beginning.

But what about that residue of paint left behind...those staining colors that cast a shadow on the once clean paper?

I find this residue to be a reliable base upon which to build a new painting. The depth and quality of the piece reveals that the residue is more than colors on a page, it is a trace of wisdom that I have gained from failure turned to hope.

War also leaves stains of loss. Hopefully, it also provides a residue of wisdom that helps us to learn as we prayerfully discover and create new ways to solve our problems peacefully.

We gather today as those who know about the washing away of the past and the building up of new creations. We know that from loss life is born. We gather as those who hold fast to that hope.