

Greetings one and all,
Chewing the Cud --- Holy Cow

When you are out in the country and you see cows, sheep, or goats say ruminants. When you see them on TV or in a magazine say ruminants. They give us the word ruminant (chewing the cud) and its relatives, meditate, reflect, ponder, etc. The words make pastoral conversations productive. Many people miss this when they come to the conversation with the conclusion already formulated in their minds. Their conversational contributions become pronouncements. Ruminant provides the essential loop for making new connections and for feed back.

These animals, called ruminants, have a stomach with more than one chamber allowing food to be chewed until digested. "Chewing the cud" is a necessary step in the process. In the formation of our words and meaning this visual source of "chewing the cud" took a metaphorical move to chewing on our life experiences for meaning and understanding.

For the ancients, cow became the antidote for fire in the expression "fire and cow." We do not normally associate the two together. Fire refers to stressors, tension, change, etc. We still have this reference to fire in a number of remarks, "hot under the collar," etc. You can make your own list. Cow offers a way to deal with the situation, "chew the cud." What are we to learn from this? What changes will we need to make? "Fire and cow" becomes a way of resolving issues.

Bruno Bittelheim used this approach as a survivor of a death camp in Germany. His book *Surviving* tells his story where periodically he would review and record what happened as a way of making sense out of his experience and the experience of others for the benefit of all. Dr. Pennybaker has taken this one step further in his linguistic inquiry of those who keep a journal during a crisis or illness.

Many of the Scripture stories come out of crisis situations. They have been the source of "chewing the cud" for generations. The Jewish Midrash and our Christian commentaries and theology are outcomes. The parables of Jesus came from ruminating on life experiences during his quiet time with God the Father. Their timeless truth and energy prompt our attention for doing the same.

A quick summary appears in the letters of the Hebrew word shalom, "fire opens the door to completeness/wholeness."

I recommend "chewing the cud" for moving our Cathedral family from a stadium church, where more are viewing, to a missional church, where more are involved.

Let this reflection, born out of the history of seeing cows and other ruminants, be our beginning and continued prompting for "chewing the cud."

Shalom,

Fr. Whitmer

meditate appears frequently in the Psalms, for example

psalm 1: 2 Their delight is in the law of the LORD, * and **they meditate on his law day and night.**

Psalm 119:15 I will meditate on your commandments * and give attention to your ways.