

Observance for 18 April 2010: John Muir (21 April 1838 – 24 December 1914)

*Observed 22 April*

John Muir is surely one of the best known figures of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century America. Born into a Scottish family of fierce Calvinist Christianity, Muir developed in interesting and idiosyncratic ways. When Muir was a boy of 11, his family emigrated to America to escape the 'lax' religion of their homeland. After college, he worked as an industrial engineer, fascinated by practical design, time and motion efficiency studies, etc. He is responsible for some remarkable inventions, including a reading desk which automatically turned pages to help the reader speed one through books, an alarm mechanism which would tip him out of bed in the morning. He was steeped in the ways of the world of ongoing industrial revolution, of finding one's worth in production. However, after an accident which temporarily deprived him of his sight, Muir experienced a dramatic change of perspective. He set out to walk from Indiana to the Gulf of Mexico, seeing all he could see. It was at this time that his extraordinary appreciation for natural beauty became the focus of his life. He took ship for California, where he was hired to run the lumber mill in the Yosemite Valley. Inspired himself by the wild beauty of the Sierra Nevada, he shared that inspiration with President Roosevelt and numerous other national leaders, who would be essential to the preservation of the natural wonders especially of the western wilderness areas. Muir found the divine in the heights of Yosemite and in the 'cathedral of the Redwoods' in



ways he had never before experienced God. His passion and personal dedication were contagious. His prolific writings still form people in an integrated spirituality of nature and wildness. He personally led countless people in explorations of the wild world, helping them to hear the voice of God and the voice of the living planet. His ability to hear the voice of the trees and mountains, to develop a deep personal relationship with places like the Hetch Hetchy Valley blazed a path for environmental spirituality for generations after him. Without him, we would not have the Sierra Club and its countless successor environmental organizations. Without him, we would not have Yosemite – and quite possibly not the National Park system as it has come to exist. John Muir introduced people both within the Church and beyond it to the sacredness of all creation and the joy and responsibility it represents to us as individuals and as a species.

*Lessons* Prayer of Azariah 52-59; Psalm 104:17-25; Revelation 22:1-5; Luke 8:22-25

*Collect* Blessed Creator of the earth and all that inhabits it: We thank you for your prophets John Muir and Hudson Stuck, who rejoiced in your beauty made known in the natural world; and we pray that, inspired by their love of your creation, we may be wise and faithful stewards of the world you have created, that generations

to come may also lie down to rest among the pines and rise refreshed for their work; in the Name of the one through whom you make all things new, Jesus Christ our Savior, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.