



March 8, 2017

### ***SEEING STARS IN SEDONA***

Using the maps and directions from our phones, we arrived at the edge of the dark field. It was near freezing, yet our guide cheerfully explained that the cold night air and Sedona's commitment to limit light pollution made the night perfect for stargazing. It was true: even without the telescope I could see Venus and Mars moving toward the western horizon and Polaris, the North Star, seemingly anchored in place. Then from Orion's belt our eyes went to Sirius, the Dog Star, our nearest neighbor and brightest visible star, shining from 8.6 light-years miles from earth. (A light year is nearly 6 trillion miles!) As our guide explained the size of the Milky Way, the life cycle of stars, from nursery to extinction, she also explained time. Not the world of red lights or microwave warm ups, or even the length of a human lifespan.

Our astronomer reminded us that the light we were seeing from our near neighbor Sirius was given off nine years ago – light from the red giant Betelgeuse, 650 years ago. We were in fact looking not up, but into the past.

In our Lenten book, ***Sabbath***, Abraham Joshua Heschel explains that in the Biblical story of Creation, the first thing God names as holy, is *time*. He quotes an ancient rabbi's insight about the problem of civilization: how can we live in the world of technical civilization, but "be in love with eternity"?

As we walk through Lent, these questions rise up: can our technologies work for us? How can our spirits be refreshed in the mysteries and holiness of time?

Peace,

Rev. Judy Swahnberg