

REFLECTIONS FOR THE 19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 07 August 2022
The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

The readings in today's Liturgy of the Word for the 19th Sunday in Ordinary time offer both challenge and comfort. The challenge comes in God's invitation to us to trust, to have faith, to be confident that God's steadfast love is always with us. The comfort comes in the assurance that we have been gifted by faith through the presence of our ancestors, those who have gone before us and have transmitted the faith to us.



First Passover

The reading from the book of Wisdom speaks about the night before the exodus, "the night of the deliverance from Egypt" (Ws 18:6) when the people's trust in God was strengthened by knowing that their ancestors (the patriarchs and matriarchs descended from Abraham and Sarah) had first trusted in God's word to them. The final words of the reading, the people "with one accord agreed to the divine law, so that the saints would share alike the same things, both blessings and dangers; and already they were singing the praises of the ancestors" (Ws 18:9), reiterate the importance of recognizing the influence of the ancestors in nourishing faith in the living God.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews echoes this same teaching, "By faith our ancestors received approval" (Heb 11:2). This writer also goes back to Abraham and

Sarah whose descendants number "as many as the stars of heaven and as the the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore" (Heb 11:12). These references come from God's conversations with Abraham (Gen 22:17, 26:4, and 32:12). This is one of five passages in which Sarah is named in the New Testament. The writer says, "All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them" (Heb 11:13). The writer concludes, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1).

Luke's Gospel continues the theme of the faith passed down to each successive generation with the assurance of God's steadfast love. Jesus says, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kin-dom" (Lk 12:32). The disciples of Jesus are asked to use their resources to "give alms," an English translation of the Greek word, *eleēmosunē*, which literally means engaging in works of mercy or "mercying." The Gospel passage goes on to speak about the master who returns to find his slaves are protecting his property and welcoming him safely home. Then the unexpected happens – the roles of master and slave are reversed as the master fastens his belt, invites them to sit down, comes and serves them. It does not matter if he comes in the middle of the night or early in the morning, this reversal of roles happens.



We immediately make the connection between this parable and the story of the Last Supper as told in John's Gospel, "And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him" (Jn 13:3-5). Faith in the steadfast love of God means sharing that steadfast love with those who share our life's journey. Having deep confidence in God's covenant with us means reaching out to others and to Earth with that same steadfast love, engaging in works of mercy, mercying.



Let all Earth fear the Lord;
let all the inhabitants of the world
stand in awe of God. Ps 33:8

Today's Psalm 33 reminds us, "Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom God has chosen as the heritage" (Ps 33:12). An earlier verse from the same psalm broadens our understanding of what it means to be God's chosen, "Let all Earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of God" (Ps 33:8). The ones God has chosen as a heritage are all the ones whom God has created, not simply the people of Israel or even humanity. All creation is God's chosen. All creation is invited "to hope in God's steadfast love" (Ps 33:18).

Trusting in God's steadfast love means trusting in our own goodness and worth. Teresa of Avila reminds us, "How can I explain the riches and treasures and delights found when the soul is united to God in prayer? Since in some way we can enjoy heaven on earth, be brave in begging the Lord to give us his grace in that he shows us the way and strengthen the soul that it may dig until it finds this hidden treasure. The truth is that the treasure lies within our very selves." By her words, Teresa is inviting us to recognize God's love in the present moment, in the place in which we find ourselves at this time in our lives. All four readings this morning remind us that faith, trust, hope all lie in the present moment, nourished by the faith which our ancestors experienced in their lives.

This week let us reflect on three questions which flow from today's readings:

1. Who first taught me to believe in God's steadfast love, passed on the faith to me?
2. How do I personally live my faith in God's steadfast love in this present moment even though I may feel vulnerable right now? Do I trust that "The truth is that the treasure lies within our very selves."
3. How do I pass on faith in God's love to others and to Earth every single day?



Five Luminous Mysteries-
Transfiguration
Image: [Frank Vincentz](#)

The 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time is held in the embrace of two other feast days which strengthen our learnings from today's readings. Yesterday, August 6, was the feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus. In an earlier chapter of Luke's Gospel (9:28-36), we read about Jesus going to the mountain with Peter, James, and John to pray. The appearance of his face changes and his clothes become dazzling bright. Moses and Elijah appear with him. Peter and his companions

want to stay in this mystical time, making a dwelling for them. God speaks from the cloud to say, "This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him," echoing the baptism of Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry. Then Jesus and the three disciples go back down the mountain to their everyday lives.

The ancestors are present (represented by Moses and Elijah), Jesus is chosen by God, we become one of the chosen ones with him, and the moment of transformation is a strengthening of our return to our ordinary lives. The spiritual writer, Jan Richardson, expresses this beautifully in her prayer-poem, *A Blessing for Transfiguration Sunday*:

Believe me, I know how tempting it is to remain inside this blessing,
to linger where everything is dazzling and clear.
We could build walls around this blessing, put a roof over it.
We could bring in a table, chairs, have the most amazing meals.
We could make a home. We could stay.

But this blessing is built for leaving.
This blessing is made for coming down the mountain.
This blessing wants to be in motion,
to travel with you as you return to level ground.

It will seem strange how quiet this blessing becomes when it returns to earth.
It is not shy. It is not afraid.
It simply knows how to bide its time, to watch and wait,
to discern and pray until the moment comes
when it will reveal everything it knows,
when it will shine forth with all that it has seen,
when it will dazzle with the unforgettable light
you have carried all this way.



On August 11, we celebrate the feast of St. Clare of Assisi, the woman whose name graces St. Clare's Mercy Hospital which this year celebrates its 100th anniversary of ministry in health and healing.

Clare was born into a wealthy Italian family yet felt a deep calling to care for poor people from her childhood. She used to sneak scraps from family meals and distribute them to hungry people outside her door. When Clare was 18 years old, she heard Francis preach at the church of St. George of Assisi. She approached him to help her live "after the manner of the Holy Gospel." They became companions. Eventually, Clare started her own order known as the "Poor Clares" who devoted their lives to prayer, poverty, silence, simplicity, and caring for the poor. She patiently insisted with church authorities that women could follow the Gospel ideals as well as men. She was the first woman to write a religious rule for her community. For forty-two years, enclosed in her convent in San Damiano, Clare lived out her vows in poverty and prayer, known for her compassion and wisdom, as well as being a healer and spiritual counselor.

One of Clare's prayers echoes the teachings from today's readings and from the story of the Transfiguration:

We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become. Imitation is not a literal mimicking of Christ, rather it means becoming the image of the beloved, an image disclosed through transformation. This means we are to become vessels of God's compassionate love for others.

One example of "becoming and we love and being shaped by who we love" appeared on facebook today. Victor Manuel Gonzales Flores posted a photograph and lovely memory. He had been taught by the Sisters of Mercy in Monsefú in their early years there.

A social outreach that, after the military government took away everything they had, they have never seen any religious entity like it. I was one of their students taught by them in primary school in the school of Our Lady Of Mercy and then in secondary school in College Carlos O'Neill Conroy. Today I am a health professional in the service of Monsefuan health. This is what the Canadian Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of Mercy did upon their arrival in Monsefú.



Coming full circle to the words from Hebrew 12:1, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen," we conclude today's reflections with a poem from [Steve Garnaas-Holmes](#).

Hope is not optimism, not wishing,
not a bet on the future,
but trust in what is already present, unseen.
I hope in the sunrise because the earth is already turning.
My faith is not that God will intervene
and make things better or fix problems;
my faith is that love is at work.
I trust in hidden love even as injustice runs loose.
I believe in our Oneness
even as war and racism wound us.
I know our Belovedness even as we assault each other.
Even though we damage the earth,
though the violent rage and the rich oppress the poor,
still this world is born of Goodness,
and grace flourishes even in bad places,
and Love holds us in aching but untiring arms.
Even when the way is not well lit, I live in hope.

