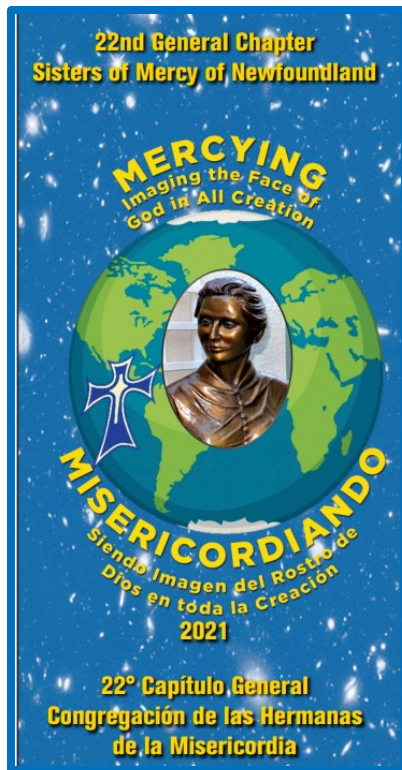


REFLECTIONS FOR THE EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 27 February 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Litledale



Today's Liturgy of the Word, the last Sunday before Lent begins, is woven with imagination, images, and integrity. Imagination is the ability of our minds to think in pictures – we use our imagination when we daydream, plan, remember, or meditate. Imagination through memory helps us recall events of the past; it allows us to contemplate our lives in the present; and it enables us to visualize our future.

Imagination is not only a gift from God – it is one more way in which we become the face of God in our world. The Sisters of Mercet Chapter 2021 theme calls us to be prophets of imagination: *Mercying: Imaging the Face of God in all creation ~ Misericordiendo: Siendo Imagen del Rostro de Dios en Toda la Creación.*

You have heard me read before the lovely poem by [Roddy Hamilton](#), *God's Imagination*:

Who puts the copper into beach trees
and the waddle into penguins
who chose the colours of a rainbow and put shapes into clouds
The Spirit of creation ~ God's imagination
Who put the notes into music
and picked the dance steps for bees

who placed the hum in humming birds and decided elephants would listen with their feet

The Spirit of creation ~ God's imagination

Who invented yeast to make bread rise and put the curve into a banana
who made laughter infectious and chocolate taste like heaven

The Spirit of creation ~ God's imagination

Today we celebrate the energy of God who created us
and brings us together in a colourful and loving community

We call her the Spirit

How does God's word today invite us into the energy and hope of imagination? The reading from the book of Sirach compares us to a sieve which when shaken shows the refuse and allows the good to fall through. It compares us to a kiln which tests the potter's vessels. It compares us to a tree and our words to the fruit of the tree. All three images speak to the integrity of the person with images from nature and from the work of human hands.

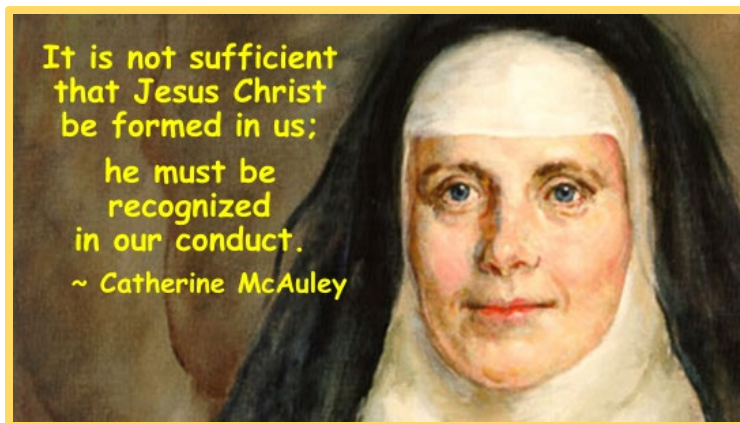
Psalm 92 also chooses to speak about the integrity of the righteous – as we say today, those who are in right relationship with our God, with each other, with Earth and all creation, and with ourselves. The psalm compares us to the tree – both the palm and the cedar, planted in the house of



our God. And, in one of the few verses of the Scriptures to do so, strengthens the image to show that a life lived well is like the tree which produces fruit even in old age, green and full of sap.

Jesus chooses multiple images in the passage from Luke's Gospel, again to help us appreciate the integrity of persons – the one who sees the speck in the eye of another but does not notice the log in their own eye, the good fruit-bearing tree, the words spoken from the abundance of the heart.

Why is integrity – being true to yourself, holding your own values, being authentic – so important? Having integrity means that you are trusted – others know that they can depend on you to be who you say you are. It means that you can trust yourself and your own instincts and that you are at peace with yourself. It means that you are confident in the person whom God created you to be. It means having the courage to stand up for what is right. Having integrity means that you will create around circles of persons of integrity who see themselves reflected in your goodness. It means that you call other, inspire others to be persons of integrity.



Persons of integrity keep their word and their commitments. They know the space in which they live. They take responsibility. They keep their promises and never betray another's confidence. They give credit when credit is due. They never take advantage of others, and they choose to give people the benefit of the doubt.

Having integrity does not mean that you are perfect. Rather it means that you are constantly becoming the person whom God is calling you to be. The founder of the Sisters of Mercy, Catherine McAuley, described integrity perfectly as she quotes from the first letter of John: "It is not sufficient that Jesus Christ be formed in us; he must be recognized in our conduct . . . 'Let us love not in word nor in tongue but in deed and in truth'" (1 John 3:18). Others have described in succinctly as well:

- ✓ "Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching." ~ C S Lewis
- ✓ The first thing is, to be honest with yourself. You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself. Great peacemakers are all people of integrity, of honesty, but humility." ~ Nelson Mandela
- ✓ "When you are content to be simply yourself and don't compare or compete, everyone will respect you." ~ Lao Tzu
- ✓ "Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean. Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of your word in the direction of truth and love." ~ Miguel Angel Ruiz (Mexican shaman, teacher, and author)

Like the sieve that sorts the real from the refuse, like the kiln that ensures the integrity of the pottery, like the tree that produces good fruit even to old age remaining green and full of sap, like the person who first takes out the log in their own eye before even seeing the speck in the eye of the other, may our lives show forth the integrity of our being. May our mouths speak words of truth overflowing abundantly from the treasury of our hearts. As Paul says in the first letter to the

Corinthians, “May we be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).

Let us reflect this week on two questions:

1. When have I recently spoken truth to another person, a small group or a large group, even when it was not easy to do so?
2. When have I recently done a good deed from the abundance of my heart, making another person’s life better or more joy-filled?

And let us this week join with God’s imagination – write a simple prayer or a poem or a short story, paint or do a pencil sketch, approach a challenging problem in a new way, play new music that I have never heard before, rearrange the special pieces on my prayer table or shelf, do a new thing with gusto and with gratitude!

This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, the first day of our Lenten journey. As we begin this special journey, let us go back to [Roddy Hamilton](#) to hear his poignant blessings for us as we enter this wilderness time:

May the dust of the wilderness hold our footprints
lovingly
shaped as they are by your hurt
for dust remembers
May the journey into wilderness unfold
honestly
for honesty is the gift
your soul recognises as you
May your time in this wilderness
be shaped by space
rather than minutes
so there is time enough for all of you
May the stones in this wilderness
cry out your name loudly
that your spirit recognises the voice
that has been calling you always
And may you know this wilderness
has been expecting you
and you find between the stones
a promise growing

Blessings of joy and hope as Lent approaches!

