

**REFLECTIONS FOR THE 33<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 13 November 2022**  
**The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale**

“See, the day is coming” – with these words from the prophet Malachi, the first reading in today’s Liturgy of the Word sets the stage for the four readings. There is a sense of an “end time” when



chaos reigns. We can identify with this fear as we look at our world today – an invasion of the Ukraine by Russia, an unrelenting climate emergency with little real response from wealthier countries despite all their promises, growing concerns about the impact of the global COVID pandemic on the cost of living felt in rising costs of food, electricity, gas, and housing as well as on the increasing fragility of health systems, threats to democracy from within democratic countries, increased attention to ways in

which so many are excluded in our society, and a church losing its credibility in society and sadly even among its own faithful followers.

Today’s readings do not make light of these sources of fear and anxiety and an impending sense of hopelessness. They speak to the stark realities in the time of Malachi as well as in the time of Jesus. But, having acknowledged the starkness and almost overwhelming forces at work, the readings then remind us to see with the eyes of God. This way of seeing changes everything!

Malachi tells us, “For you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings” (Mal 4:2). Older translations used “you who fear my name,” reinforcing the belief that the God of the Old Testament is a fearsome God. The Hebrew word is better translated as “revere” or, the words of the Jesuit John Foley’, “reverential wonder.” In our time, with instruments like the James Webb space telescope, we have an even greater awareness of the power of the sun in our lives:

The sun is absolutely essential to our existence as life forms on planet Earth. All we have to do is consider the lifelessness of our neighbor planets. Mercury and Mars, to realize that we have a privileged relationship with our flaming star. We circle the sun at just the right distance from its heat to receive its light and heat in just the right quantity to be nurtured rather than singed. All life on Earth



derives from the energy of the sun. Without the sun, we earthlings simply would not exist. authors of the Hebrew Bible found the sun an apt symbol of its transcendent Creator. If the love of God is as powerful, healing, threatening, and awesome as the fire of the sun, it is as protective as the care of a nursing mother. (Dennis Hamm, sj)

The prophet adds another image to the sun as symbolic of the Creator, that of the bird with healing in its wings. We can see the sun’s rays covering the face of the Earth and the eagle sheltering its

young in its wings. Charles Wesley so beautifully embedded this verse in his Christmas carol, "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," which we will be singing in little more than a month's time:

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Son of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings  
Ris'n with healing in His wings

Psalm 98 mirrors this same way of looking at our fragile and broken world with God's eyes as it proclaims in verses 6 to 9:

With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.  
Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
the world and those who live in it.  
Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy  
at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth.



Not only do humans rejoice in the Creating and Sustaining God who holds us tenderly in the midst of the stark realities, but so do the sea and the floods and the hills. All together the sacred communion of all creation rejoices that our God dwells with us!

Jesus' words in Luke's Gospel echo the same message, "I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict" (Lk 21:15). His message is well summarized by Veronia Lawson rsm, "There is life to be lived and there are struggles to be endured before God's final advent. Luke wants to offer hope and encouragement in the face of conflict, persecution and family division. He wants to offer his readers a caution not to listen to everyone who claims to know the time, the *kairos*, of God's visitation. . . we are called to witness to a gospel way of life, to hold the word of God fast in honest and good hearts and to trust that we are not alone in the everyday struggles of life."

This is to be our response in the midst of all the uncertainties and chaos of this time. It is to trust that our God is present among us, bringing healing and hope. It is to rejoice that we share that healing and hope with all creation. It is to listen with ears of our heart and to see with God's eyes. In the words of the pastor Karoline Lewis: extension



**Helix Nebula ~ Eye of God**

Our testimony, our witness gives voice to what Jesus sees, to whom God sees. God needs us to be the eyes of the Gospel when the world and those who have the loudest voices in it seem only to see the temples and towers and how they are adorned with beautiful stones. We are called to have a vision that can perceive the activity of God when it looks as if that which is against God has the upper hand. We are called to have a vision that is intent on seeing what God sees and who God sees — no matter what.

Remember the prayerful reflection often associated with Archbishop Óscar Romero but written by Bishop Kenneth Untener entitled "Prophets of a Future not Our Own." This prayer reminds us about what we can and must do in this time of hope not hopelessness, life not death, joy not despair:

This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

The poet, Steve Garnaas-Holmes, gives us this poem-prayer which summarizes so poignantly today's readings. The first part is a promise given to us; the second part is our personal response:

Though the land go dry or the oceans rise, you are in the arms of the Beloved.  
Though times may seethe and the air swirl with shouting, you are being held.  
Though people around you may be angry or in a panic, the One who holds you is at peace.  
Though people speak ill of you, the name you bear is mercy.  
Though the streets may flow with hate, your heart is suffused with love.  
Though people hurl fear at you, your soul will not be harmed.  
Though you be threatened, you will not perish.  
Nothing can prevent your courageous love.

Today I bear witness to grace. Today I practice kindness.  
Today I choose love over fear. Today I am not afraid to be generous.  
Today I belong to the whole world, not merely a portion of it.  
No matter what others around me choose, today I choose to live in peace.

In these days leading to Advent, in the words of John Foley sj, "we will be preparing to receive our tender invitation shown forth in a child. . . in order that soon we will be humble enough to prepare for the baby." May the sun of righteousness flow over us with healing in its wings.

