

REFLECTIONS FOR TRINITY SUNDAY ~ 12 June 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

We gather this day in the name of the Creator,
who creates time and space, galaxies and stars and planets.
In the name of Jesus Christ, born on planet Earth,
and in the name of the Spirit who fills Earth with her presence.
Creator God,
in this time we call 'now' in this space we call 'here'
we worship you.
Make your presence felt among us.



Photograph
Thomas R. Fletcher

This first Sunday after Pentecost is Trinity Sunday, a time to reflect on our Christian way of naming our God. Richard Rohr ofm wisely tells us, "Trinity leads you into the world of mystery and humility where you can not understand, you can only experience." What is there in our experience of God as Trinity which nourishes us and gives us courage in these challenging times?

Three themes emerge in my reflections on Trinity that are embedded in today's readings: delight in creation, inclusion, and

dynamic energy and movement. The first reading is from Proverbs where we are introduced to Woman Wisdom (*Hokmah* in Hebrew, *Sophia* in Greek). This passage is a delightful re-telling of the creation story – the depths, springs abounding with water, the mountains shaped, hills, earth and fields, the world's first bits of soil, the heavens, the face of the deep, the skies above, the fountains of the deep, the foundations of the earth – all the elements of the creation of the cosmos. But the first act of creation is Woman Wisdom, the one created at the beginning of the acts, before the beginning of Earth, when there were no depths or springs or mountains or hills or earth or fields or "bits of soil."

Woman Wisdom is present with God in every step of creation as a "master worker" or "an artist" or a "little child" (the Hebrew לִילְדָה is unclear here), but certainly as a companion. And Wisdom is not only a companion in the acts of creating, but with God delights in these acts. This delight is so strong that "delight" and "rejoicing" are repeated four times in the same sentence, "I was daily God's delight, rejoicing before God always, rejoicing in God's inhabited world and delighting in the human race" (Prov 8:30-31). Part of the wonder and delight is that Wisdom herself shares with us this wonderful memory of the moment of creation. In Genesis 1, the creation story reflects the beauty and order of creation; in Genesis 2, the narrative focuses on God's need for humanity to complete creation;



Fractal, Roger Johnston

and here in Proverbs 8, the focus is on God's delight, shared with Woman Wisdom, in the created cosmos, including humankind.



**Fresco of Trinity, Urschalling
Upper Bavaria, 12th Century**

In our Christian tradition, we have used this image of Wisdom to understand better Jesus the Christ, most evident in John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being." That imagery has been a gift as we have struggled to understand the Cosmic Christ. We have also used the imagery to help us better understand the wonder and joy of the Holy Spirit. It is helping us imagine the Spirit as feminine. There is a profound fresco from as long ago as the 12th century in which the Spirit in the Trinity is portrayed not as a dove (the usual artistic image) but as a woman. We as Roman Catholics have also used the imagery to help us better appreciate the person of Mary, the Mother of God.

Today's Psalm 8 enhances the closing words of the reading from Proverbs in which God and Woman Wisdom delight in the human race. In the words of the scripture scholar, Walter Brueggemann, "The creator creates with wisdom: wisdom has a practical connection to human beings who live in God's created, well ordered world. Thus this entire speech of wisdom is a summons to humanity." The Psalm focuses on that summons to humanity within the context of the creation of the universe – the heavens, the moon and the stars, the sheep and oxen, beasts of the field, birds and fish, and all sea creatures. It is a humbling reminder to us that, despite our frailty and our sinfulness, God chooses to be mindful of us, to include us as co-creators, and to entrust us with the stewardship of Earth.

The mystic, Julian of Norwich, describes so simply our inclusion in the circle of love that is the Trinity, "And the deep wisdom of the Trinity is our Mother, in whom we are enclosed. And the high goodness of the Trinity is our Lord, and in him we are enclosed and he in us. We are enclosed in the Father, and we are enclosed in the Son, and we are enclosed in the Holy Spirit. And the Father is enclosed in us, the Son is enclosed in us, and the Holy Spirit is enclosed in us, almighty, all wisdom and all goodness, one God, one Lord."



In his letter to the Romans (5:1-5), Paul speaks of the peace, faith, grace, sharing in the glory of God, hope, and love that have been poured into our hearts through the presence of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit with our God. The wonder of that relationship among the Three and the inclusion of us and all creation in that relationship is echoed in the passage from John's Gospel. Jesus speaks of the promise of the Spirit of Truth who will "guide you in all the truth." An unknown author expresses this relationship of the Three in this way:

The Word you spoke, and keep speaking, O God
is the life, the sustenance, of all that is – seen and unseen.

The Life you gave, and keep giving, O Christ
is the recreation, the renewed birth of every broken, wounded and sinful creature.
The breath you breathed, and keep breathing, O Spirit
is the inspiration for creativity, compassion and community
that connects and unites all that God has made.
Life-giving, Life-restoring, Life-fulfilling God,
our worship seeks to honour you, our hearts are devoted to you
and our lives are completely given over to you. Amen.

The third theme is that of dynamic energy and movement. Meister Eckhart, the 13th century Dominican theologian, philosopher, and mystic, writes so joyfully:

Do you want to know what goes on in the core of the Trinity?
I will tell you.
In the core of the Trinity
the Father laughs
and gives birth to the Son.
The Son laughs back at the Father
and gives birth to the Spirit.
The whole Trinity laughs
and gives birth to us.

In our time, the Jesuit John Foley writes about the Trinity, “What aliveness, what movement there is in God: speaking, reaching out, flowing forth, receiving back. God is liquid motion, a dynamism in which everything is changing always, yet always remaining the same because it is love. We are invited into that circle of love. Even in today’s difficult world.”

We conclude with a prayer-poem by [Steve Garnaas-Holmes](#) which gathers our three themes of creation, inclusion, and dynamic energy, all enlivened by our experience of God as Trinity:

O Loving Mystery,
womb of all that is and womb within us,
silence and darkness and gentle companion,
you who are beyond, beside and within us,
unknowable and known, eternal and waiting
to be born in us,
Lover and Beloved
and the Love that flows between,
we praise you and thank you
that we are members of your Body,
stewards of your light, words of your song.
Sing in us; dance in us;
love in us, you who love us perfectly,
that the circle may be complete.
Amen.



Today, on Trinity Sunday, this is our prayer, “O Three in One, sing in us, dance in us, love in us, you who love us perfectly, that the circle may be complete!”

REFLECTIONS FOR THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI ~ 19 June 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

Today Canada celebrates the feast of Corpus Christi while Peru celebrated it on Thursday past, the traditional date. Many see this feast as a leftover tradition from the Middle Ages when most people did not receive Communion regularly but were comforted by seeing and adoring the host in the monstrance. Holy Thursday celebrates the mysteries contained in Scripture that are foundational to our understanding of Eucharist. So, is there any need or purpose in continuing to celebrate Corpus Christi when today we have the privilege of frequently participating in the Eucharist? In one of God's ongoing surprises, our new understandings of social justice and ecology are giving this day new meaning.



Unlike Holy Thursday when other matters of faith coincide with Eucharist – Jesus' words at the Last Supper, his washing of the feet of the disciples, and the beginning moments of his Passion, the feast of Corpus Christi focuses solely on the celebration of the Body and Blood of Christ present among us. The use of bread and wine as signs of that presence is in itself gift. Bread and wine are among the most basic and the most ordinary of all food and drink on Earth. They are the work of God's

hands – the wheat and the grapes – joined with the work of human hands making the bread and the wine. In Pope Francis' words at last year's feast, "Today once more we find the greatness of God in a piece of Bread, in a fragility that overflows with love, overflows with sharing. *Fragility* is precisely the word I would like to underscore. Jesus becomes fragile like the bread that is broken and crumbled. But his strength lies precisely therein, in his fragility. *In the Eucharist, fragility is strength*: the strength of the love that becomes small so it can be welcomed and not feared; the strength of the love that is broken and shared so as to nourish and give life; the strength of the love that is split apart so as to join us in unity."

In the southern highlands of the Cusco Region of Peru, the festival of Quylluriti'i is held near Corpus Christi in the Sinaqara Valley. As many as 10,000 pilgrims come from neighboring areas. Culminating on Trinity Sunday, this festival marks the return in the sky of the brightest stars visible in both northern and southern hemispheres, the Pleiades constellation, known in the Quechua language as Qullqa, or "storehouse," as it is associated with the upcoming harvest and New Year. The festival precedes the official feast of Corpus Christi, held the Thursday following Trinity Sunday, but it is closely associated with it. In this festival, the Indigenous peoples of Peru celebrate the coming together of Earth and heaven in a special way.

We proclaim in today's psalm, "From the womb of the morning, like dew, your youth will come to you" (Ps 110:3). The 13th century mystic, Angela of Foligno, used this theme of Earth's giving birth



Dancers at Quylluriti'i

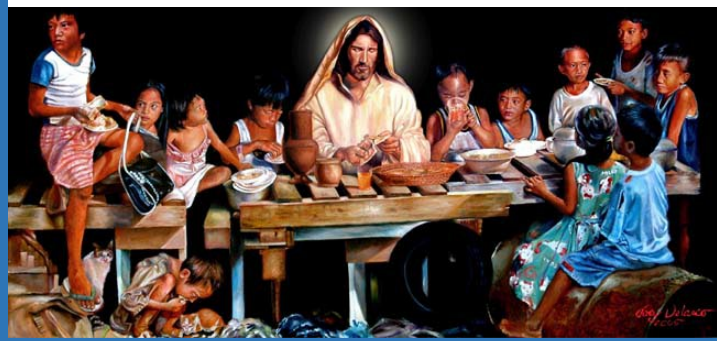
when she says, “I beheld and comprehended the whole of creation, that is, what is on this side and what is beyond the sea. . . And my soul in an excess of wonder cried out: ‘This world is pregnant with God!’” In our time, the mystic and theologian, Beatrice Bruteau, echoes this same imaging, “We can stand amazed at the creativity of the world’s expression of its Creator, who has ‘given birth to’ a world which has evolved to the place where it can ‘give birth to’ God.”

How does each person, Earth, and all creation give birth to God? We find some of the answers to this question in the interconnection of food, blessing, sharing, and creation threaded throughout the words of the king and priest Melchizedek of Salem to Abraham as he gives him bread and wine, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth” (Gen 14:19). Melchizedek means “king of righteousness” and the placename “Salem” means “peace.” In Luke’s Gospel account of the food given to the five thousand, blessing and sharing again underline the love of Jesus for the people gathered to listen to him, “And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled” (Lk 11:16-17).



First comes blessing – a sense of naming as holy the food and drink of the meal, naming as holy God’s creation. We echo that affirmation of our food and of all the cosmos as holy each time we bless ourselves and say grace before a meal. As you bless yourself and say grace before your next meal, let it not be simply an automatic gesture but allow yourself to be filled with the holiness of Earth, the holiness of the food you are about to eat, and the holiness of you who are nourished by the food. You, the food, and the Earth are God’s dwelling places. Corpus Christi reminds us that in the sacrament of his most holy body and blood, Christ claims and consecrates us and all of creation as holy.

Last Supper, 12 children from poor areas of Manila and Quezon City in the Philippines, Joey Velasco



In the words of the Jesuit, Tom Elitz, “If we believe that the bread and the wine can truly be transformed into an incarnation of Love, into *Corpus Christi*, then we can have the confidence that we ourselves can be transformed into love incarnate, into sons and daughters of God. That is what the Eucharist does. The bread and wine are transformed, so that *you* can be transformed, so that *we* can be transformed. In our

own transformation into sons and daughters of God, none of us becomes a solo artist. We become part of a choir – a choir that sings love songs to God.”

The effect of the blessing is the strong impulse to share. The meal is itself a shared meal. We use Bruteau’s word to show the diverse ways of sharing – “ordinary food as well as shelter, clothing, medicine, tools; energy, working with/for one another, emotional energies, being supportive; mental goods including news, personal stories, memories, ideas, what makes us feel that we are a community; the sharing of the deep and precious insights and revelations that have shaped our lives; and the sharing of the secret stories of God’s favor to us, “devotion and joy and happiness.”

The sharing of food, explicit in the reading of the Corpus Christi story, means something more in our world of a global environmental crisis and the need to address food shortages and world hunger. In our time, a spiritual writer uses Jesus' words to challenge us to address world hunger:

More than enough food is grown to feed everyone on this planet. *'You give them something to eat.'* Lk 9:13

More than 60,000 people will die of hunger on this feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. Two-thirds of them will be children. *'You give them something to eat.'* Lk 9:13

Nearly one in five people worldwide is chronically malnourished—too hungry to lead a productive, active life. *'You give them something to eat.'* Lk 9:13

One-third of the world's children are significantly underweight for their age. *'You give them something to eat.'* Lk 9:13

The amount of money the world spends on weapons in one minute could feed 2,000 malnourished children for a year. *'You give them something to eat.'* Lk 9:13



Dom Helder Camara, the Brazilian archbishop, socialist and liberation theologian, wrote this prayer to remind us that the food of the Eucharist is for the nourishment of others:

Am I mistaken, Lord, is it a temptation to think
You increasingly urge me to go forth and proclaim
the need and urgency of passing from the Blessed Sacrament
to your other presence, just as real, in the Eucharist of the poor?
Theologians will argue, a thousand distinctions be advanced.
But woe to the person who feeds on You,
and later has no eyes to see you,
to discern You foraging for food among the garbage,
Being evicted every other minute, living in sub-human conditions
under the sign of utter insecurity.

In Paul's account of the Last Supper, repeated in every Eucharistic meal, are Jesus' words, "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Cor 11:24). Pope Francis says, "In Mass the death and resurrection of Jesus are set before us. Do this in remembrance of me: come together and celebrate the Eucharist as a community, as a people, as a family, in order to remember me. We cannot do without the Eucharist, for it is God's memorial. And it heals our wounded memory." The remembrance of Jesus, giving birth to God in our world, is found in the blessing and in the sharing.

This coming Tuesday, June 21, is National Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada. This is a day for all Canadians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures, and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. The Canadian Constitution recognizes these three groups as Indigenous peoples. Although these groups share many similarities, they each have their own distinct heritage, language, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. In our province, we have five Indigenous communities: the Innu of Labrador, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut, the Inuit of NunatuKavut, the Mi'kmaq of Miawpuke (Conne River), and the Qalipu (another Mi'kmaq people).



In cooperation with Indigenous organizations, the Government of Canada chose June 21, the summer solstice, for National Indigenous Peoples Day. For generations, Indigenous peoples and communities have celebrated their culture and heritage on or near this day because of the significance of the summer solstice as the longest day of the year.

Today is another day for memory as we celebrate Father's Day. The only title Jesus uses for God is Father. Joseph was Jesus' father on Earth, a man who influenced the person Jesus became. And so today we remember and give thanks for our own fathers using this prayer from Rev. Abi:

O God, we today pray for Fathers near and far.
 We pray for Fathers alive and Fathers who are dead.
 We pray for Fathers who were present with their children and those who were absent.
 We pray for new Fathers and old Fathers.
 We pray for those who loved well and those who did not love as well.
 We pray for Fathers who play(ed) with their children and those who don't.
 We pray for those who take their fathering seriously and those who don't.
 We pray for biological dads and dads who raised us.
 We pray for those who don't get to be dads at all.
 We pray for Fathers who were let down by their dads,
 We pray for Fathers who were not loved by their fathers.
 We pray for Fathers who missed out on the presence of fathers.
 We pray for fathers whose fathers did not play with them.
 We pray for Fathers who may be caught up in this recession and lost their jobs.
 We pray for Fathers who serve in the military in far away places and lands.
 We pray for Fathers who may be trapped by addictions.
 We pray for Fathers who are serving in prison away from their children.
 We pray for Fathers who are all wrapped up in their work too busy for their children.
 We pray for our fathers. We pray for them to have strength, wisdom and courage.
 We pray for them to raise their children in the way that they should go.
 We pray for them to love, laugh, play and live.
 We pray for forgiveness for our fathers,
 for their shortcomings, their weaknesses, and their abuses.
 And God, we pray that we may then be able to pray to you, Abba Daddy. Amen.

REFLECTIONS FOR THE 13th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 26 June 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

Today we return to ordinary time within the Church's liturgical year. We have had the richness of the Easter season followed by Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, Corpus Christi, and the feast of the Sacred Heart. Now we come back to the ordinariness of our everyday lives, in itself another source of richness and blessing.

In Psalm 16 this morning, named as a healing psalm by the Jewish rabbis, we heard a beautiful description of that "ordinary life," "I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I keep the Lord always before me; because God is at my right hand, I shall not



be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure. You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:7-9, 11). Paul's letter to the Galatians shows us how to find that quiet blessing in our ordinary lives, ". . . through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' Live by the Spirit" (Gal 5:13-16).

In the Gospel reading from Luke, we find another one of those hidden surprises that give us a special insight into living by the Spirit. "When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set towards Jerusalem. When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But he turned and rebuked them" (Lk 9:51-55).

Veronica Lawson explains the background behind this episode: "Jews and Samaritans shared a common origin story, but their respective histories led to a deeply conflictual relationship. While the Samaritans worshipped the God of Israel, they accepted only the first five books of the Bible as God's word. They were despised by their southern neighbours. Jesus and his Galilean Jewish friends could hardly have expected a gracious welcome in Samaria. They may have been received more warmly had Jesus planned to stay and worship in the temple on Mt. Gerizim, the centre of Samaritan life and worship. The problem for the Samaritans is Jesus' decision to use Samaritan territory simply as a staging post on his journey to Jerusalem, the heart of Jewish life and worship: the Samaritans 'did not receive him because his face was set towards Jerusalem.'"

The disciples, who do not yet understand the meaning of Jesus' passion and soon-to-be death and glory in the miracles that they have seen him carry out, want him to punish the Samaritans for their unjust response. While they gloried in the miracles, they forgot Jesus' words: "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God" (Matt 5:9), "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mk 12:31), and "Love your enemies, do good



to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also” (Lk 6:27-29).



Today we are becoming more aware of this response understood as nonviolence. While we Roman Catholics have not begun to use that term until recently which helps us look at it with new eyes. However, Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains name nonviolence as a basic tenet of their faith traditions, in Sanskrit, *ahimsa*. As we watch violence continue to torment our world and target the people and Earth most at risk, Pope Francis is calling us to focus more intentionally on nonviolence which he names as “a style of politics for peace.” How do we live nonviolence in our ordinary lives? We live it through contemplation, action, and prophecy.

The **contemplative approach to nonviolence** has been described by the Catholic priest, John Dear, one of the creators of Center, in this way, “we have to dig deeper spiritual roots and that means practicing contemplative nonviolence. We have to take time for quiet meditation with the God of peace every day. . . . It’s hard to change the world; we can barely change ourselves. But God can change us and the world if we allow the God of peace to touch us, disarm us, heal us, and send us out as instruments of God’s peace. . . .”

The **active approach** flows through our everyday lives, as Pope Francis reminds us, “The choice of nonviolence as a style of life is increasingly demanded in the exercise of responsibility at every level, from family education to social and civil commitment, to political activity and international relations. . . . We are called to conversion, transformation, and healing in our lives, our church, and our world, even as we are called to live the spirit of mercy and constructive action for change, always and everywhere. . . . All of us want peace. Many people build it day by day through small gestures and acts; many of them are suffering, yet patiently persevere in their efforts to be peacemakers. May we dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banishing violence from our hearts, words, and deeds, and to becoming nonviolent people and to building nonviolent communities that care for our common home.” There is also the reminder that we must be nonviolent towards ourselves – words so many of us need to hear, “The journey toward interior nonviolence begins with non-cooperating with our own inner violence. From now on, we try not beat ourselves up, put ourselves down, or be violent toward ourselves.”



The prophetic dimension calls us to work with others. Organizations such as *Pax Christi*, the *Beatitudes Center for a Nonviolent Jesus*, *Pace e Bene*, and *Campaign Nonviolence* are leading the way for us in our Catholic faith tradition. From September 21 to October 2, 2022 (from the International Day of Peace to International Day of Nonviolence), we are invited to join people in calling for a culture of peace and nonviolence, acting in solidarity with the efforts to prevent gun violence, halt the climate crisis, stop racist police brutality, eliminate nuclear weapons, divest from fossil fuels and weapons, guarantee food and shelter for all, protect the water, land, and air from destruction and pollution, and more.

This week, I invite all of us to choose one of the following words from the leaders in the nonviolence movement, from our past and today. Let the words you choose seep into your very being, call you to see with contemplative vision, and dare you to become an even more passionate champion for nonviolence around you.

- Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God. ~ Matt 5:9
- Before you speak of peace, you must first have it in your heart. ~ Francis of Assisi
- Holy Spirit, the life that gives life: You are the cause of all movement. You are the breath of all creatures. You are the salve that purifies our souls. You are the ointment that heals our wounds. You are the fire that warms our hearts. You are the light that guides our feet. ~ Hildegard of Bingen



- We are all like localized vibrations of the infinite goodness of God's presence. So love is our very nature. Love is our first, middle, and last name. ~ Thomas Keating
- One is called to live nonviolently even if the change one works for seems impossible. ~ Daniel Berrigan
- There is no deliverance for any people on this earth or for all the people of this earth except through truth and nonviolence in every walk of life without any exceptions. Nonviolence is the first article of my faith. Nonviolence is the last article of my creed. ~ Mahatma Gandhi
- Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon. Indeed, it is a weapon unique in history, which cuts without wounding and ennoble the one who wields it. ~ Martin Luther King
- To me, nonviolence is the all-important virtue to be nourished and studied and cultivated. ~ Dorothy Day
- I ask God to help all of us to cultivate nonviolence in our most personal thoughts and values. May charity and nonviolence govern how we treat each other as individuals, within society and in international life. ~ Pope Francis

We conclude our reflections this morning with a gentle prayer from [Thom Shuman](#) to God, Three-in-One:

Inspiring God, Giver of words:

you speak and chaos is transformed into the starry skies of night;
you whisper and the wind leaps to caress our cheeks on a summer's evening;
you smile and all creation rejoices in delight.

Jesus Christ, Uncomfortable Word:

you stand with society's castoffs outside the halls of respectability;
you break bread with sinners and give them the seats of honor at your Table;
you walk the darkened hallways of death,
comforting those who are taking their last steps;
and you call to us, saying, "Follow me."

Holy Spirit, Word sifter:

by your touch our anger can dissolve into gentleness;
by your presence our enemies can become lifelong friends;
by your joy, our envious spirits can become generous hearts.

God in Community, Holy in One, set us free to be your servants.

REFLECTIONS FOR THE 14TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 03 July 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

“One who reads the words of prayer with great devotion may come to see the lights within the letters.” These words from the Jewish Hasidic teachings on contemplative prayer come to life in our readings from the Liturgy of the Word this day. Each of our four readings has within it lights and symbols and sounds that resonate not only in our minds but, even more, in our spirits.



The first reading from Isaiah 66 was written in the time of the return from the Babylonian exile, a time when the Jewish community was finding itself once again in the land. But now they were in a land that they no longer owned, they were experiencing new relationships with foreigners since many of them were now married to people who were not Jewish, they had a new form of relationship with their God now that the temple had been destroyed, and they had a new appreciation for the importance of the written word – their scriptures – in shaping their faith tradition. Today's reading speaks to their

confidence in the God who rescued them from exile. Their confidence is expressed in three ways: a call to joy, Jerusalem personified as a mother, and God comforting the children of Jerusalem.

The call to joy comes in acknowledging the sadness and grief of their past lives yet knowing that they have returned home to Jerusalem and the surrounding region. The expression of their joy is presented in a symbolic way, “that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom” (Is 66:11). Jerusalem is presented as a mother with her newborn child, comforting her child and giving her child nourishing milk. It is important to note the dignity of woman embedded here in the recognition of God's presence to the people of Judah in comforting and in caring for them.

But, in the next verse, the symbol is deepened further. Now God is presented as a mother, “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem” (Is 66:13). This is not the first time in the Old Testament that God's is imagined as a mother. We read in Numbers, “Did I conceive all this people? Did I give birth to them, that you should say to me, ‘carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a sucking child, to the land that you promised on oath to their ancestors?’” (Num 11:12), and in Deuteronomy, “You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you; you forgot the God who gave you birth” (Deut 32:18). There are several references to God as mother in the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 42:14, God cries out like a woman in labor, “I will cry out like a woman in labour, I will gasp and pant.” In Isaiah 49:15, God is depicted as more attentive and compassionate than a nursing mother, “Can a woman forget her nursing-child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.” Meister Eckhart, the 13th century theologian and mystic, says, “What does God do all day long? God gives birth. From all eternity God lies on a maternity bed giving birth.” Eckhart goes further and says, “We are all meant to be mothers of God, for God is always needing to be born.”



Psalms 66 begins with words so well known to us, “Make a joyful noise to God, all Earth” (Ps 66:1). Yet we rarely take the time to ponder in our hearts the depth of these words. Think of the many

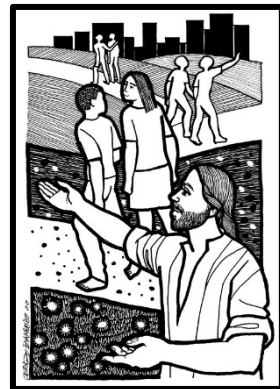


ways that all Earth makes a joyful noise to God: a little baby laughing, a gull crying, a waterfall splashing its waters against the rocks, the whisper of wind through the trees, a mewling kitten, a crackling fire, the saying of the Rosary, a roll of thunder, the music of Beethoven, the roll of the ocean waves, a babbling brook, rain falling softly on the window, the chirping of a little chicken, the signing of this psalm. . . Think of the ways in which you personally make a joyful noise to

God – in your morning prayer, in your laughter with friends, in your words of comfort to someone who is suffering, in your sharing of a funny story, in your simple greeting to a staff person, in your heartfelt words of thanks to someone, in your plea for justice for Earth. This week, take moments every day to hear the joyful noise of Earth, giving praise and thanks to God in sound. Take moments every day to make a joyful noise yourself giving praise and thanks to God.

The resonating sounds of the readings continue in the short reading from Paul's letter to the Galatians with its two beautiful words of blessing, "As for those who will follow this rule –peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16) and "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters" (Gal 6: 18). As the reading says, such peace and mercy will bring about "a new creation" (Gal 6:15). Remember that the Galatians would have heard these words spoken aloud, not in written form, yet another way of "making a joyful noise"!

In the Gospel passage today (unique among the four Gospels), the writer describes Jesus' appointing "seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go" (Lk 10:1). We read almost the same sending forth in Lk 9:1-6 when Jesus appoints the Twelve: they are to go out to "every town and place," they are not to take any supports with them (no purse, no sandals), and they are to drive out demons, cure the sick, teach about the coming of the kin-dom of God, and bring "peace" (Lk 10:5-6). They are not to stay where they are not welcomed, not to force themselves on people who choose not to listen. Why "seventy"? Seventy is a symbol for all humankind, all the peoples of Earth – in Genesis 10, we are told that there are seventy "nations" descended from Noah's three sons after the flood had destroyed all the peoples of the Earth.



We know the Twelve by name, all men. We also know from Luke 8 that women were among Jesus' followers, "The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources" (Lk 8:1-3). It is likely then that the "seventy others" included women. In the four Gospel accounts, we usually meet women disciples in groups (supporting Jesus and his disciples, standing at the foot of the cross, watching at the tomb, appearing after the resurrection), and, in the Acts and letters of Paul, we often find the women disciples within pairs or small teams. In the Acts of the Apostles which was written by the same writer as was Luke's Gospel, we meet Priscilla and Aquilla mentioned three times (Acts 18:2–3, 18, 26) and three other times in Paul's letters (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:2–5; 2 Tm 4:19). Paul's letters also speak about Andronicus and Junia (Rom 16:7), Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2-3), Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis (Rom 16:12), and Nereus and his sister (Rom 16:15). That the "seventy others" go out "in pairs" strongly suggests the inclusion of women disciples in their midst.

Wherever the seventy disciples went, it was as if Jesus himself was with them. He trusted them to bring peace, to teach, and to heal. He warned them that following him would not always be any easy road – sometimes they would be warmly welcomed and other times they would be ignored or treated disrespectfully. They would know their reward only when their “names are written in heaven” (Lk 10:20). You know from your own experience of being a “missionary disciple” (as Pope Francis calls us in his *Joy of the Gospel*) that what Jesus said to the seventy has been true for you. And so, I ask you today (not after you have died), “How is your name written now in heaven?” Why is heaven rejoicing in who you are and what you have done?

The spiritual writer, Jan Richardson, in her [“Blessing in the Dust”](#), describes the rewards of being among those “seventy others”:

You thought the blessing would come in the staying;
in casting your lot with this place, these people;
in learning the art of remaining, of abiding.
And now you stand on the threshold again.
The home you had hoped for, had ached for,
is behind you – not yours, after all.
The clarity comes as small comfort, perhaps,
but it comes: illumination enough for the next step.
As you go, may you feel the full weight of your gifts
gathered up in your two hands,
the complete measure of their grace
in your heart that knows there is a place for them,
for the treasure that you bear.
I promise you there is a blessing in the leaving,
in the dust shed from your shoes
as you walk toward home –
not the one you left but the one that waits ahead,
the one that already reaches out for you
in welcome, in gladness for the gifts that none but you could bring.

Rejoice today that your names are written in heaven, rejoice for the gifts that none but you could bring!



REFLECTIONS FOR THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 10 July 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

The readings in the Liturgy of the Word for the fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time have an almost mystical rhythm. Moses, speaking to the people in the reading from Deuteronomy, reminds them that God's word is not too hard for us to follow or too far away from us to understand. Rather, he says, "The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe" (Deut 30:14).

Psalms 69 tells us that God's word is given in an "abundance of steadfast love" (Ps 69:13). The psalmist sings passionately to our confidence in this abundant love and mercy, "Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me" (Ps 69:16). God will answer us, rescue us, protect us, let our hearts revive, and save and rebuild our cities.

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, deepens that confidence when he assures us that Jesus the Christ "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him" (Col 1:15-16). He then goes on to say, "in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col 1:19).

These first readings from the Liturgy invite us to follow God's word, assure us that we will find the way to do so in the ordinariness of our everyday lives, comfort us with the message of God's abundant steadfast love and abundant mercy, and then give us that added assurance that Christ is the image of the invisible God, the One in whom all the fullness of God is pleased to dwell, the firstborn of all creation. Now the parable that Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Luke makes these messages clear in a simple, startling story that answers the questions the lawyer asks. How can I love God with all my heart and with all my soul, and with all my strength? How can I love my neighbour as myself? Indeed, who is my neighbour? Jesus answers the lawyer's questions and our own same questions by vividly describing for us the unfolding of five moments in mercy in response to an act of violence.

You know the story so well. A man lies beaten by the roadside. A priest and a Levite see him, but they walk past him. A Samaritan sees him and cares for him, bringing him to a nearby inn to allow him time to heal. How can we see these five moments of mercy in this simple story?



Seeing contemplatively – the storyteller repeats three times "when he saw him." The priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan each see the beaten man. Of all three men, the Samaritan would be the most likely not to stop since he was a foreigner in the land of Judah and would likely have been blamed for beating the man if anyone saw him. But the Samaritan is the only one of the three who sees him through contemplative eyes. The Jesuit, Howard Grey, says that contemplative seeing means, "Allowing the heart to be touched profoundly by identifying with the nameless ones, allowing our vision to change us."

Having a compassionate heart – when the Samaritan sees the beaten man through contemplative eyes, "he was moved with pity, with compassion." There is a beautiful Sanskrit word for "compassion" which comes to us through Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions – दया

daaya. Its literal meaning is “suffering in the suffering of all beings.” One of the titles for God in the Old Testament is The Compassionate One (God, the mercifully compassionate One, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them – Ps 78:38). In the Quran, God’s name used at the beginning of every chapter except one is *Allah, Ar-Rahmaan – the Most Compassionate One, Ar-Raheem – the Most Merciful One*). In most of the miracle stories about Jesus in the New Testament, we are told that Jesus “was moved with compassion” (“A leper came to Jesus begging him, and kneeling he said to him, ‘If you choose, you can make me clean.’ Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I do choose. Be made clean!’” – Mk 1:40-41).

Mercying – contemplative seeing and a heart moved with compassion lead the Samaritan to care for the beaten man, bandaging his wounds after pouring wine and oil on them. The Jesuit, James Keenan, describes it in these words, “Mercy is the willingness to enter into the chaos of others.” In another parable, this time from the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus describes mercying in explicit ways, “I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger, and you welcomed me, I was naked, and you gave me clothing, I was sick, and you took care of me, I was in prison, and you visited me (Matt 25:35-36). I was Earth broken and abused, and you cared for me.”



Building circles of mercy – the Samaritan did not care for the beaten man by himself. He went to the innkeeper and asked him to take care of the man, beginning to build a circle of mercy. But he widened that circle of mercy by using the fruits of Earth, the wine and oil, to tend the man’s wounds. He used his donkey to carry him to the inn. He uses the road to find his way to the inn. In one of the Hindu Vedas, we see this beautiful expression of all beings within the circle of mercy, “O God, scatterer of ignorance and darkness, grant me your strength. May all beings regard me with the eye of a friend, and I all beings! With the eye of a friend may each single being regard all others!” (Yojht Veda, XXXVI,18)

Now the answer to “Who is my neighbour?” becomes more complex than we had imagined. My neighbour is not only the one who lives closest to me, the one who looks and thinks most like me. It is the one who may be most unlike me – in my race or my colour or my faith tradition or my gender or my way of seeing the world or my abilities. It is the other-than-human beings – the animals or insects of fish or birds or flowers or trees or bodies of water or hills and mountains or plains. Christ is not only the firstborn of all humanity; he is the firstborn of all creation, the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). The joy of this new understanding of “neighbour” is reflected in the theme from the Chapter of the Sisters of Mercy in 2021, “Mercying: Imaging the Face of God in All Creation ~ Misericordiando: Siendo Imagen del Rostro de Dios en Toda la Creación.”

What are the circles of mercy that you help shape today?
 Who joins you in these circles?
 Whom do you invite – who invites you?
 Do you welcome a stranger into your circle?
 Are you invited into circles of mercy
 that you would never have imagined in the past?
 In which circles, do you find healing?
 In which circles, are you a source of healing and compassion?
 Where are the circles of mercy which you share with Earth?



What is the newest circle of mercy that has brought you much joy?
What are the circles which you dream about shaping in the near future?

Creating a culture of mercy – Jesus gives us the fifth moment in mercy in his last conversation with the lawyer, asking him, “Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” (Lk 10:36). The lawyer answers, “The one who showed him mercy” (Lk 10:37). And Jesus concludes the teaching, speaking to the lawyer and to each one of us, “Go and do likewise” (Lk 10:37). Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us that it is not enough to tend to the beaten man. We must ensure that such violence is prevented in the first place, “On the one hand we are called to play the good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey of life's highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”



**Der barmherzige
Samariter**

Paula Modersohn

To create this culture of mercy and compassion, we need to think and act locally, globally, and cosmically, in Veronica Lawson's words, “Cosmic thinking invites us to focus not just on the human characters from different cultures and social strata in this story, but also on the neighbourly animal, on the fruit of the vine and of the olive grove and on the silver, coins formed of material derived from cosmic activity, extracted from the earth and ultimately engaged as signs of compassionate neighbourly love. It invites us to reverence all of creation and the Creator of all that is.”

As we reflect on these five moments of mercy, Pope Francis cautions us and comforts us in our reading this parable, “All of us have in ourselves something of the wounded person, something of the robber, something of the passers-by, and something of the Good Samaritan.” During this coming week, take time to see yourself in the wounded person, in the robber who attacked him, in the priest and in the Levite, and in the Samaritan.

We conclude our reflections today with words from the spiritual writer, Judy Cannato, in her book *Fields of Compassion* that simply yet profoundly tell us what a culture of compassion looks like:

Compassion changes everything.

Compassion heals.

Compassion mends the broken
and restores what has been lost.

Compassion draws together
those who have been estranged
or never even dreamed they were connected.

Compassion pulls us out of ourselves
and into the heart of another,
placing us on holy ground
where we instinctively take off our shoes
and walk in reverence.

Compassion springs out of vulnerability and triumphs in unity.

May God's words of steadfast love and abundant mercy be in our mouths and in our hearts all the days of our lives.

REFLECTIONS FOR THE 17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 24 July 2022
The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

“On the day I called, you answered me” (Ps 138:3) – these words from Psalm 138 are the touchstone for the readings in today’s Liturgy of the Word. Two threads are woven through the readings that are speaking about prayer: listening and relationship.



Before beginning our reflections on prayer, let us remember that, while there are many names and images of God in the Old Testament, two images are most common. When we see the name “God,” the image is usually of a God who is powerful, all-seeing, all-knowing. As we read the creation story in the first chapter of Genesis, we see that this God creates the heavens and the earth simply with a word. This is the image of the God who calls the prophet Isaiah, a God the hem of whose robe fills the entire temple in Jerusalem (Is 6:1). The second image appears when the name “the Lord God” or “the Lord” is used. The Lord God is very much like one of us – this God is troubled, forgets, cries, and struggles to make a decision. In the creation story of the second chapter of Genesis, the Lord God who creates the earth and the heavens does so step by step and, when finished, takes a break by walking “in the garden at the time of the evening breeze” (Gen 3:8). This is the image of the God who calls the prophet Jeremiah in a calm and comforting conversation (Jer1:4-7). There is little doubt that, in our first reading today, it is the second image of God which is present!

The Lord has returned to earth to make sure that the two cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are as sinful as they are accused of being. Abraham, who is not a resident in either city, stands before the Lord, daring to come near and daring to challenge what the Lord is about to do. In effect, he makes the Lord re-think what the Lord is planning to do. Abraham asks the Lord if the Lord will destroy the city even there are still fifty righteous people living there, arguing that the Lord who has chosen him would certainly not act this way, “Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you!” (Gen 18:25). The Lord responds, “If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake.” The wonderful conversation between the Lord and Abraham continues with Abraham asking the same question for forty-five, forty, thirty-five, thirty, twenty, and finally ten righteous, and each time the Lord answering that, “for the sake of . . . , I will not destroy it.”

There are several surprises in this story. First, Abraham chooses to advocate for two cities which are sinful and negotiates directly with the Lord, pleading for the sake of even a few residents who are good. This is a profound example of social justice of which the Synod of Bishops wrote in 1971, “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.” The Lord participates in the negotiation, each time seeing reason in what Abraham is pleading. This Lord is One who cares enough first to discern the truth about what is happening and then listens to and is convinced by Abraham’s arguments.



Abraham Sees Sodom in Flames
James Tissot

That Abraham would convince the Lord to save the city even if only a very few of its people are righteous is also a lesson for us in understanding the sacred communion of all creation. In that communion, the good that we do, even if we think it is very little (like the fifty or forty or ten

righteous ones living in a very large city), makes a difference. Our gentle smile for one who is lonely, our acceptance of suffering, our simple note sent to express gratitude, our taking time to help someone else even when we feel tired, our choosing to place another's need ahead of our own need, our quiet connection with a lovely daisy or admiring gaze upon a full moon, our ministry in Huarmey or Puerto Eten or The Gathering Place or St. Patrick's Mercy Home or St. Clare's,



our accepting leadership tasks on behalf of the Sisters, our taking time in quiet contemplation, our joining in global contemplation through Zoom – seemingly little gifts that all bring energy and hope into that sacred communion. Every good that we do strengthens the communion of all creation to which we have been called by our God, helps us live into our role as co-creators of a better, more just and more peaceful world. In Psalm 138, the psalmist reminds God about this communion of all creation which our God has created in mercy and in love, challenging God as Abraham does, “Do not forsake the work of your hands” (Ps 138:8).

Prayer is about speaking and listening, not just hearing but truly listening. God listens – to Abraham and to the psalmist. The wonder of prayer is that God asks us to speak and asks us to listen just as God listens. One spiritual writer says, “Listening is a choice, something that requires attention, an action that requires us to make sense of the sounds, the words, that reverberate within our minds and hearts.” Listening demands silence and attentiveness and a desire to truly know what is in the heart of the other. We are invited to listen as God listens. The poet, [Mary Oliver](#), describes praying in this simple poem:

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch
a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway
into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.



In the Gospel, the disciples ask Jesus, “teach us to pray” (Lk 11:11). Jesus' answer must have been a surprise to them. He gives them the words of a simple prayer which we know today as the “Our Father.” It is a prayer said at least once by almost every Christian every day. Luke's version of this prayer is shorter than the version in Matthew (the one on which our present version is based). The beginning of the prayer, “Our Father,” makes so clear that all prayer is relationship, our intimate relationship as individuals and as community with our God, a relationship taught to Jesus by his Jewish tradition and taught to us by Jesus. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus cries out in his agony in the garden, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want” (Mk 14:36). In Romans and in Galatians, Paul comforts us with the assurance that God has sent the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” (Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6). “Abba” is the intimate



and endearing Aramaic word that translates “Daddy” in English or “Papá” in Spanish.

The Sufi master, [Neil Douglas-Klotz](#), helps us retell this prayer of Jesus in the context of our new understandings of cosmology:

O Birther! Father-Mother of the Cosmos
Focus your light within us – make it useful.
Create your reign of unity now –
through our fiery hearts and willing hands.
Help us love beyond our ideals
and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures.
Animate the earth within us:
we then feel the Wisdom underneath supporting all.
Untangle the knots within
so that we can mend our hearts' simple ties to each other.
Do not let surface things delude us,
but free us from what holds us back from our true purpose.
Out of you, the astonishing fire,
returning light and sound to the cosmos. Amen.



**Helix Nebula *Eye Of God*
Hubble Space Telescope**

As part of his response to the disciples' question, “teach us to pray,” Jesus tells the parables of the neighbour asking for bread late at night (the wisdom of persistence) and the child asking the parent for a fish. He then gives us the encouraging, comforting words, “Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened” (Lk 11:9-10). In this conversation between God and me (or between God and us), we are expected to participate – as Abraham and Jesus show us. We ask, we search, we knock, we show God our hearts. God hears not only what we say, but what we cannot always express. God listens to our joys and our sorrows, to our hopes and our fears, to our dreams and our laments. God listens.

The Australian Sister of Mercy, [Mary Wickham](#), has given us a profound and poetic image of this relationship between God and us with her poem “The Door of Mercy”:

The Door of Mercy is double-hinged,
swinging in, opening out,
sturdy, yet easily moved.
My friend says: You only have to knock once,
and you only have to knock lightly.

The Door of Mercy rests on the threshold of need.
Its single key is kindness, which is always in the lock.
Faithfulness is its lintel,
hope and healing the strong jambs either side.

The Door of Mercy might be splendidly red,
it could be an unobtrusive brown.
It will need to be carefully handled
and its fittings are locally sourced.

Mostly the Door of Mercy stands ajar.



In spirit and in flesh you cross its threshold each day,
often unmindful, but sometimes,
and increasingly, amazed at its potent familiarity.
The smell of the food of home wafts out,
the blood of the wounds of the earth flows in.

It is not immediately apparent
which side is which of the Door of Mercy,
since they interchange fluidly,
pain and promise etched sharply on both.
Blessing is for all who come and go, stay and return,
helper and helped, all belonging, each bestowing.

My friend says: You only have to knock once,
and you only have to knock lightly.
The God of Mercy, whose door it is,
is always home.

During this coming week, choose a phrase from this prayer-poem to hold in your heart and in your spirit. Let the phrase guide you into a conversation with your God, marked by words and by silence.

We conclude our reflections on prayer as it unfolds in today's readings with lessons from a spider!
[Steve Garnaas-Holmes](#) helps us learn from this unlikely teacher:

Spider, teach me of prayer:
happy with where you work,
flowering shrub or rusting hubcap;
the first leap from here to there,
that suddenly possible connection,
repeated and amplified,
the little knot of hope, extended,
enlarged, layered out
in the architecture of patience,
the ever expanding rounds
more like a window than a door,
the thinness of your lines,
yet how they hold morning dew
and shrug off ripping winds. Teach me
the grace of not getting caught
in your own web,
not thinking or even looking
how your little feet work the tightropes,
on your legs as thin,
well, as thin as prayer.
And then the waiting, so still,
the still, still waiting, waiting
for the tiny bug of God.

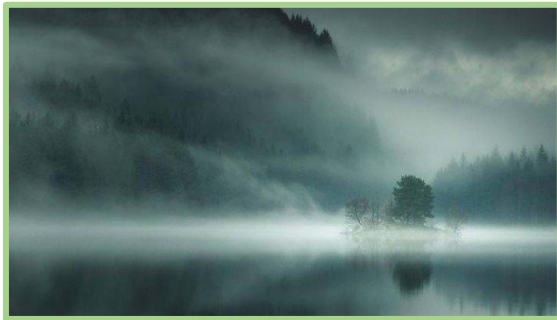


O God, we give thanks for your steadfast love and faithfulness. O God, we give thanks for your listening heart. O God, we give thanks that you do not forsake the work of your hands.

REFLECTIONS FOR THE 18TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 31 July 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

In today's Liturgy of the Word, Qoheleth in the book of Ecclesiastes and Jesus in the Gospel of Luke show deep insight into humans, into our motivations and our life choices. Both speak about the human need to fill empty spaces in our lives and about the challenges of what we choose to fill these empty spaces. They also remind us that these choices form our characters, often in directions which happen to us without our really knowing.



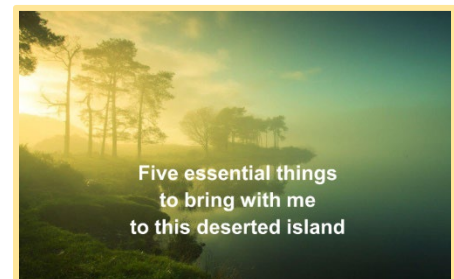
Qoheleth (translated "The Teacher" in English) uses the Hebrew word "hebel," translated as "vanity" or "vanities" in English and "no tiene sentido" in Spanish – it is actually used seven times in today's four short verses! The original meaning of "hebel" in Hebrew (הבל) is "vapor," "mist," or "whisp." The word "hebel" is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to show how fleeting or ephemeral life can be. Job declares, "I loathe my life; I would not live for ever. Let me alone, for my days are a

breath" (Job 7:16). The psalmist emphasizes the swiftness of life, saying, "You have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight. Surely everyone stands as a mere breath" (Psalm 39:5), and again "They are like a breath; their days are like a passing shadow" (Psalm 144:4). Today's psalm uses other images to show the same truth, "For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night. You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers" (Ps 90:4-6).

Jesus makes the same point in his parable of the rich man who has to tear down his barns to make bigger ones to contain all his grain, saying to himself, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry" (Lk 12:19). That very night God calls the man into eternal life, asking, "The things you have prepared, whose will they be?" (Lk 12:20). Here Jesus is echoing Qoheleth who says, "Sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it" (Eccles 2:21). The story is told that, at the funeral of the very wealthy Aristotle Onassis, one of the mourners turned to another and said, "How much did he leave" And his friend replied, "Everything. He left everything."

Today then to help us ponder what we truly value in our lives and how we fill the empty spaces in our lives, let us each ask ourselves three simple questions:

1. What did I spend my money on last year?
2. What did I spent my time on last year?
3. If I were to be placed on a desert island where I would be assured of enough food and water and a place to sleep, what other five essential things would I take with me?



And then let us ask a fourth question: "When I die and leave everything behind, what do I hope my greatest legacy will be?" How will I be remembered? What will people say about me that truly mattered to them? How did I make a difference in someone else's life?



The last words in today's Gospel give us more food for thought about what truly matters in our lives, "So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God" (Lk 12:21). What does it mean to be "rich towards God"? Psalm 90 gives us part of the answer, "Teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart" (Ps 90:12). The writer of the letter to the Colossians reminds us that the answer is found in our own choices, "You have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator" (Col 3:9-10). Part of that new self renewed in the image of the creator is inclusion, "In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and

free; but Christ is all and in all!" (Col 3:11).

Ways of being rich towards God are found throughout the scriptures from Micah (6:8), "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" to Matthew (25:35-36), "I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you welcomed me; I was naked, and you gave me clothing; I was sick, and you took care of me I was in prison, and you visited me." Being rich in God is knowing that you are one in the sacred communion of God's creation, nourishing and being nourished by that communion every moment of every day. Being rich in God is choosing to rejoice in and live into our interdependence with one another and with all Earth, caring for one another and caring for our common home.

Let us take to heart the words of the poem, "[The Summer Day](#)," by Mary Oliver:

Who made the world?
 Who made the swan, and the black bear?
 Who made the grasshopper?
 This grasshopper, I mean –
 the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
 the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
 who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down-
 who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
 Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
 Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
 I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
 I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
 into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
 how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
 which is what I have been doing all day.
 Tell me, what else should I have done?
 Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
 Tell me, what is it you plan to do
 with your one wild and precious life?



What is it I plan to do with my one wild and precious life? Let me, let us really live our one precious life as if every breath, every decision, every action, and every second matters.

REFLECTIONS FOR THE 16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 17 July 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

The readings for today's Liturgy of the Word focus on hospitality – sacred hospitality, radical welcome. In the book of Genesis and in the Gospel of Luke, we see such radical hospitality with a depth of meaning that is not always immediately evident.



The story from Genesis speaks to a visit from the Lord to Abraham and Sarah. While we are told at the beginning of the story that the Lord appeared to Abraham, Abraham does not know that it is the Lord. Instead, he sees three strangers. He immediately offers them the best of hospitality – a warm welcome, a gracious bow, water to wash their feet, and a place to rest under the tree (the oaks of Mamre). He then directs Sarah to make bread for them and the servant to prepare the calf from his herd. He serves them this food with milk and curds. The three ask for Sarah – Abraham points to her in the tent. Then one of the three says that Abraham's wife Sarah will have a son. Regrettably, the story is not completed in today's reading. As the story continues in Genesis, Sarah laughs when she hears that she will have a son since she and Abraham are older, and she is past child-bearing age. We can only imagine that this was a laugh to cover deep pain and heartache. Then she and the Lord have a conversation about why she is laughing. God speaks to the woman as well as to the man when the promise, which will affect both of them, is made.

In the previous chapter, when God changes the names of Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah as a sign of the covenant, God promises Abraham that Sarah will bear a son. Abraham laughs at the idea (Gen 17:17), probably with less pain than Sarah since he has already borne his son Ishmael. When Sarah's son is born, he is named Isaac, meaning "the one who laughs." After his birth, naming, and circumcision, we have a poignant reflection from Sarah which brings today's story to a new place, "Sarah said, 'God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.' And she said, 'Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age'" (Gen 21:6-7). Abraham's and Sarah's radical and sacred hospitality have brought peace and hope, not only to them, but to the three religious communities that call them ancestors in faith: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.



The story taken today from Luke's Gospel illustrates another form of sacred hospitality with unintended outcomes. It tells the well-known story of Jesus and his disciples visiting the home of Martha and Mary. The traditional interpretation (and the one most used today) is that Martha is busily preparing the meal while Mary sits at Jesus' feet as a disciple who is learning from his wise teachings. Martha, preparing a meal for thirteen hungry men, asks Jesus to tell Mary to help her. Jesus scolds Martha, saying that she is worried and distracted by many things while Mary has chosen the better part. This interpretation is flawed. Let us look at five indications that tell us we need to read this story with contemplative eyes and to see something far more radical.

The first indication is in the opening verse. "Martha welcomes Jesus into her home" (Lk 10:38). This tells us that, despite the stereotype of women in Jesus' time, Martha is the leader of this household. Later, in the letters of Paul, we will meet other women who, as leaders of their



households, become leaders of the first house churches (remember Lydia in Acts 16:13-15, Mary of Jerusalem in Acts 12:12; Chloe of Corinth in 1 Corinthians 1:11, Nympha of Laodicea in Colossians 4:15, and Phoebe in Romans 16:1-2). Martha is certainly a forerunner for these women. The deference to Martha as leader of the house is reflected in Jesus' conversation with her. There is no suggestion that he has a conversation with Mary who "listened to what he was saying" but does not appear to respond. And when he speaks to Martha, he calls her by name twice, "Martha, Martha."

The next indication is found in the English interpretation of the original Greek text. The English interpretation (as do other modern interpretations) skews the meaning to emphasize the traditional interpretation. The phrase, "Martha was distracted" using the Greek word *περιεσπᾶτο* (or *periespato*), is better translated as "pulled in many directions." Anyone who has had to cook for thirteen men by herself, probably unexpectedly, would understand what that means! Our text leaves out the word "also" (Greek *καὶ* or *kai*) in the verse, "She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and listened to him" (Lk 10:39). It seems that both Mary and Martha were disciples of the Rabbi Jesus as were many other women who accompanied Jesus. The final mistranslation is perhaps the most telling. The word "tasks" by which Martha is pulled in many directions in Greek is *διακονίαν* (or *diakonian*). The verbal form of the same word is repeated in the phrase "do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself" (Lk 10:40). The Greek word used is "to serve," *διακονεῖν* (or *diakonein*). This is the root word for "deacon," used about the first seven deacons named by the apostles and used about Phoebe, the leader of the church in Cenchreae. Martha is ministering in the "tasks" that are pulling her in many directions. Her work is not frivolous or unimportant. She is a deacon who is engaged in mercying.

The third indication lies in the placement of this story in Luke, immediately after the story of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan begins with a contemplative gaze as we reflected when we did the reading last Sunday. That contemplative seeing leads to a heart overflowing with compassion, followed by mercying (actions to support the wounded man in his suffering), and by shaping circles of mercy with people and Earth. Jesus adds that we must go on to create a culture of mercy and compassion. Contemplation and action become integrated in response to suffering and pain.

This becomes the fourth indication – Jesus' way is the way of contemplation in action. This is shown over and over again in Jesus' ministering. He takes time apart for contemplation and prayer. He teaches the disciples and followers to take that time as well. But his heart overflows with compassion, and he heals. His parable outlined in Matthew 25 gives the same direction to all of us, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me" (Matt 25:35-36). The psalmist today asks and answers the question, "O Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?" (Ps 15), by connecting both contemplation and action.



Cookie cutter illustrating the lovely Shaker quote: *hands to work and hearts to God*

The founder of the Sisters of Mercy, Catherine McAuley, deliberately re-interprets the story of Martha and Mary found in Luke by using images from Matthew, "The functions of Martha should



be done for Him as well as the choir duties of Mary. . . He requires that we should be shining lamps giving light to all around us. How are we to do this if not by the manner we discharge the duties of Martha?" (Lk 10:38-42 and Matt 5:16). In this interpretation, she was faithful to a longstanding Christian tradition of the balance between contemplation and action, each one supporting and enlivening the other with the story of Martha and Mary becoming the image for finding this balance. One of Catherine's contemporaries, Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, a Moravian, shows that

Martha and Mary are imaging the God of creation in the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest, "The call of Martha and of Mary are both sanctified and both blest by Him, and as they primarily set Him forth, the one in His six days' labour, the other in His sabbatic rest, so do they equally express His goodness and mercy in the bountiful gifts which He affords, and in the farther gift of the talents, activities, and industry, useful to elicit their various and recondite value."

Our fifth indication is in our lived experience today. Two realities of the lives of women are reflected in this story of Martha and Mary. Martha, even though she is leader of her household, has to prepare the meal for the men by herself. That is the expectation of the society then and today. Women provide the majority of health care in the home and in health care facilities. Women are paid less than men for the same work or work of equal value. Women are most at risk for domestic abuse, for the outcomes of war, for the implications of COVID, and for the impact of climate change. Mary sits at the feet of the Rabbi as a disciple, but she listens only and does not speak. Women in our church are still not allowed to preach the homily at Mass. They are still underrepresented in theological faculty positions in universities around the world and in government leadership roles globally. To quote one spiritual teacher who echoes Jesus' words, "Justice to women is life in the presence of God: justice in the home, justice in the school, justice in the marketplace, justice in the business world, justice in the church. 'She shall not be deprived of it.'"

In our Congregation, we have become more centered on what we name as "engaged spirituality" or "reflected action" or "praxis" which brings together contemplation and action. We need both, and we need both to be integrated, one with the other. We must hold in prayer and reflection those who are suffering and at risk in our world, and we must act to reduce the suffering and risk. We must find time to enjoy the beauties of God's creation in a tree or a rainbow or a flowing stream, and we must find ways to mitigate climate change. We must grow in deeper awareness of integral ecology, and we must care for our common home. This is how we live the motto of our past Chapter, *Mercying: Imaging the Face of God in all Creation ~ Misericordiendo: Siendo Imagen del Rostro de Dios en toda la Creación*.



In our personal lives, we will find that the balance shifts from time to time. When I was a younger woman, I was actively engaged in health care ministry at St. Clare's Mercy Hospital and then at the regional health authority. Today, many years later, I have been helping lead a truly contemplative endeavour which resulted in Health Accord NL, a new approach to improving health outcomes and health equity for the people of our province. When we are in suffering and pain,

when the energy to pray or to act is no longer there, our contemplation is deeply centered in trust in God's providence.

The story in Luke cannot and must not be read as a competition between women who engage in active ministry on the one hand and in quiet contemplation on the other, suggesting that Jesus believes that the latter is the better way. Our five indications show that such a reading is flawed and disrespectful to the Gospel teaching.

In early 2016, LCWR published *Avanti!*, a collection of reflections written by 30 LCWR members about responding to God who comes to us from the future and invites us to come forward. My reflection in that journal speaks to the weaving of contemplation and action into mercying through radical hospitality:

God, coming from the future, whispers to us that uncertain times and places cry out for radical inclusion. This God dares us to look closely at those whom we invite to our tables and at our relationships with guests who are strangers or strange, not looking like us, not sharing our values. This God dares us to listen with "the ears of our hearts" to the cries of a hungry child, an abused woman, a trafficked teenager, a tormented mentally ill man, a dying person, a lonely elder, a displaced family, fractured land, poisoned water, a wounded Earth. Inclusive welcoming will lead us to risk, cause us to challenge a social order which keeps people poor, and make us realize that we are not masters but guests of Earth. Our one certainty is rooted in this God's promise, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all . . . your young ones shall see visions, and your old ones shall dream dreams" (Joel 2:28/Acts 2:17).

Let us find our final words on the wonder of contemplation in action in the prophet Micah whose book Jesus would have read frequently, "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic 6:8).



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.



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.

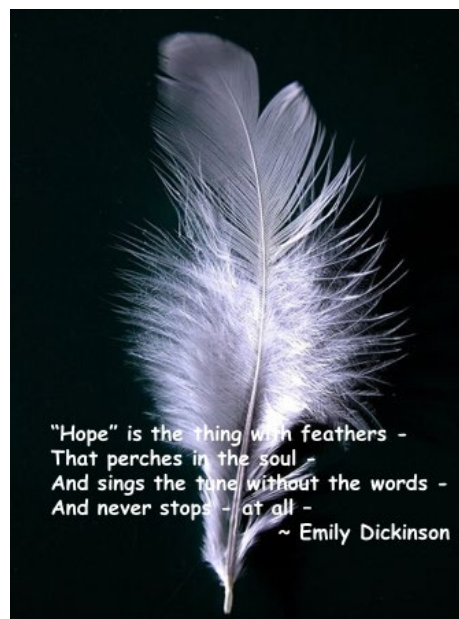
A social outreach that, after the military government took away everything they had, they have never seen any religious entity like it. I was one of their students taught by them in primary school in the school of Our Lady Of Mercy and then in secondary school in College Carlos O'Neill Conroy. Today 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.



**Sisters Marion Collins and Mildred Brennan
with Young Children in Monsefú in 1960s**

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.



"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -
~ Emily Dickinson

REFLECTIONS FOR THE 20TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 14 August 2022
The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

Each one of us has a favourite book or passage from Scripture – passages which, when we hear them, cause our hearts to fill with joy or our spirits to be touched with healing. Today's readings contain three such passages for me.

In the letter to the Hebrews, we read, "Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us" (Heb 12:1). In the words of Jesus in Luke's Gospel, we hear, "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Lk 12:49). And in Psalm 40, the psalmist rejoices, "I waited patiently for the Lord who inclined to me and heard my cry" (Ps 40:1).

"We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses"



All Saints Day 1 Wassily Kandinsky

This image of the holy ones in our lives who influence us to run with perseverance the race before us calls forth deep gratitude from us. Think first of the cloud of witnesses who have died before you – parents, siblings, relatives, friends, people whom you never knew personally but have influenced your very being, the founder of your religious community or its members who have passed on the charism to you – all the holy ones who have given you the wisdom and the courage to do the good you need to do. Think of the cloud of witnesses who share your journey with you today – family members, friends, colleagues, people whom you do not know personally but whose lives have given you strength to go on.

Think of the cloud of witnesses who are other-than-human on Earth or in the universe – the rain or sun or snow or stars or grasses or flowers or trees or fish or puppies or kittens or music or paintings or poetry or mountains or hills or sunsets or morning mist – all of God's created beings that show you the wonder of love and joy in your life. How blessed we are with this communion of holy ones, living among us now or gone before us into eternal life!

Take time this week to see with the eyes of your heart images of this cloud of witnesses from your childhood, your youth, your early adult years, and your present years. Prepare to be surprised at who or what your eyes see in the cloud of witness. As the writer of Hebrews says in a later verse, "Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb 13



Angels Unawares, Timothy Schmalz

"I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled" – in what race that is set before us is this cloud of witnesses encouraging us to follow with perseverance? Jesus' words in Luke's Gospel remind us that following the good news is not always easy or simple. Indeed, it is often countercultural, inviting us to challenge the norms of today's society, calling us

not only to do good for those who are suffering or are in need but to find ways to end the very causes of suffering in our world – whether suffering of persons or Earth creatures or Earth herself. Pope Francis tells us, “The fire of love, lit by Christ in the world through the Holy Spirit, is a boundless fire. It is a universal fire. This was so ever since the early days of Christianity: bearing witness to the Gospel spread like a beneficial fire, overcoming all division among individuals, social categories, peoples and nations. Bearing witness to the Gospel does burn. It overcomes all forms of particularism and keeps charity wide open to all, with a preferential option for the poorest and the excluded.”



Catherine McAuley used the powerful image of women as the fire Christ cast on the earth. She took Jesus’ words and stated desire, and she brought them into her time when Jesus’ will was being done, the fire was kindling, indeed very fast. She wrote about five young women who were joining her community, “This is some of the fire He cast on the earth – kindling.” In another letter referring to the same five women, she adds, “It is very animating to see five persons most happily circumstanced,

leave their family and country, to enter on a mission contrary to our natural inclinations, but the fire that Christ cast upon the [earth] is kindling very fast.”

While we often speak about Jesus as the Bringer of Peace, this passage reminds us that Jesus is also a Disturber of the Peace! We should not be surprised. When Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus to the temple for circumcision, Simeon prophesied that “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed” (Lk 2:34). Jesus was rejected by his hometown of Nazareth – “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?’ And they took offence at him” (Mk 6:3). When Jesus preached in the synagogue, the people were angered, “When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff” (Lk 4:28-29).

As Jesus and his disciples were going from Galilee to Jerusalem, they were not allowed to enter the village in Samaria, “On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to prepare for his arrival, but they did not receive him because his face was set toward Jerusalem” (Lk 9:52-53). Many of his disciples reacted negatively when they heard Jesus’ teaching, “Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him” (Jn 6:66). In his early preaching, Peter says, quoting Psalm 118:22, “This Jesus is ‘the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone’” (Acts 4:11). Paul says that “we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (1 Cor 1:23).



For what is your heart on fire and kindling? Does your heart burn for justice for homeless people or for children who are abused or for Earth which is being destroyed by our greed? Does your heart cry out for inclusion for people who have severe mental illness or are deemed to be “different” or who do not act in the way we think best? Does your heart reach out in compassion to those who are lonely or feel abandoned or are experiencing signs of cognitive impairment? Does your heart ache for animals and trees destroyed by wildfire or water polluted by waste or air made toxic by poisonous chemicals? For what is your heart on fire and kindling?



“I waited patiently for the Lord who inclined to me and heard my cry” – the psalmist speaks for all of us in this statement of trust. I love the original Hebrew translation of “the Lord who inclined to me” – it is “the Lord who stretched out to me.” The Lord does not simply answer my cry – the Lord stretches out a hand to me, eagerly responding when I give the slightest indication that I need help! So many psalms echo this same level of trust – “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Ps 23:1); “You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy” (Ps

16:11); “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Ps 27:1); “For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken” (Ps 62:5-6); and “You have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me” (Ps 63:7-8).

Think of the wording of the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-10: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kin-dom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.” For those who reach with openness and trust, God responds with abundant blessing.

Take time this week to reflect on times you waited patiently for God and God answered in ways that you never expected. Think of times when you had reason to despair but trusted that you were held safely in the shadow of God’s wings. Listen to the new song which God is putting in your mouth, “The Lord put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God” (Ps 40:3).

We conclude our reflections today with a conversation between Catherine of Siena and a modern spiritual writer.

Catherine:

*Be who God meant you to be,
and you will set the world on fire.*

Response in prayer:

*Sister, saint, dear heavenly friend,
Teach me how to believe like you did.
Show me how to be brave like you were.
Be the spark that helps me start
a wildfire of God’s love,
like you said we all can.*



**Statue of St Catherine of Siena
Gardens of Castel Sant’ Angelo
Rome**

REFLECTIONS FOR THE 21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 21 August 2022
The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

"I am coming to gather all nations and tongues" (Is 66:18) and "Strive to enter through the narrow door" (Lk 13:24). These two passages from today's Liturgy of the Word seem to send us contradictory messages, one from the book of Isaiah and one from the Gospel of Luke. Yet both messages speak to inclusion, engagement, and encounter in the sacred communion of all creation.

The passage from Isaiah comes from the end of that book, written in the time of the return of the people of Judah from their exile in Babylon. The whole book of Isaiah is amazingly inclusive. In most books of the Old Testament, there is a focus on the people of Israel as God's chosen ones and on the relationship between God and this people. Even today, followers of Judaism do not seek converts and are slow to embrace those who wish to convert to the religion. This is most unlike Christianity and Islam, both of which believe that they are meant to strongly encourage converts to their religious traditions.



However, in the book of Isaiah, we encounter a God who reaches out to include all peoples and nations among the chosen ones. Indeed, as we just read, God comes to gather all nations and tongues! Yes, it will be all the people – whether they are rich people coming on horses and chariots and dromedaries or poor people coming on mules. In their coming, they join the children of Israel who offer a grain offering on a clean vessel in the house of the Lord (Is 66:20). Indeed, many of them become leaders of God's people.

Psalms 117, the shortest of all the psalms in the Book of Psalms, repeats this same sense of inclusion of all – "Praise the Lord, all you nations! Extol the Lord, all you peoples! For great is the Lord's steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever" (Ps 117:1-2). All peoples and nations are included in God's steadfast love and faithfulness, and they are included for all time!

Jesus echoes this same teaching found in the passage from Isaiah when he says that "the people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the Kingdom of God" (Lk 13:29). But Jesus, in this passage, reminds us how the passage from Isaiah begins, "For I know their works and their thoughts" (Is 66:18). Although God's invitation reaches out to everyone, it is an invitation, and it can be accepted or rejected. Each one is invited, and each one has the freedom to choose the response.

That response cannot be tokenism, but it must be made from the depths of our being in integrity and in truth. Jesus says that just because one is a member of the people of Judah is not enough. We can add further that just because we call ourselves Christians or Roman Catholics or members of religious institutes is not enough. Indeed, Jesus uses the powerful metaphor, "Strive to enter through the narrow door" (Lk 13:24) to remind us that not everyone who knocks on the door will be admitted. The writer to the Hebrews uses a different metaphor for the same message, "Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees and make straight paths for your feet for what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed" (Hew 12:12-13).



The Lord knows the works and thoughts of all who are called. We are called to make straight paths for our feet. Jesus cautions us that the door to enter is narrow.

That way through the narrow door is a way of peace, love, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The prophet Micah tells us so simply that the only way is “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8). In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus gives us another set of simple directions, “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me” (Matt 25:35-36).

In John, Jesus reminds the disciples and us, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). In today’s passage from Luke’s Gospel, we learn that key to walking in the way, the truth and the life is inclusion. Pope Francis speaks so often about “the art of encounter” and “a culture of encounter.” In his encyclical letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, he says:

Seeing ourselves from the perspective of another, of one who is different, we can better recognize our own unique features and those of our culture: its richness, its possibilities and its limitations. . . Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground: all these things are summed up in the one word “dialogue”. . . Each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable. This also means finding ways to include those on the peripheries of life. For they have another way of looking at things; they see aspects of reality that are invisible to the centres of power where weighty decisions are made.

In his previous Encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis includes all creation in that call to encounter: “Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.” In shaping this culture of encounter, Pope Francis calls us to ecological wisdom, “respecting all creatures as valuable for their own sake in the eyes of God and not assessing them only as opportunities for exploitation. To see all creatures as our sisters and brothers is to value the interconnectedness of our universe.”

In the present journey to the *Synod on Synodality*, we are further encouraged to engage in shaping a culture of encounter, “Encountering faces, meeting eyes, sharing an individual’s history represents the closeness that Jesus embodies, and no question annoys or disturbs him, because he is open to encounter. Every encounter, as we know, calls for openness, courage, and a willingness to let ourselves be challenged by the presence and the stories of others. Encounter, listen and discern.”



During this coming week, let us reflect on the ways in which we are striving to enter that narrow door, responding to God's invitation to be one with all in the sacred communion of all creation. For many of us, "drooping hands and weak knees" are not just a metaphor – they are our everyday realities. In the midst of these realities, how does each one of us cultivate the art of encounter, shape a culture of encounter? How do we approach, speak to, listen to, look at, come to know, and understand one another? How and where do we encounter, listen, and discern? How do we continue to spread the good news wherever we find ourselves at this time in our lives?

There is a lovely hymn written by Marty Haugen entitled "All Are Welcome" which speaks to the essence of encounter.

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children
tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

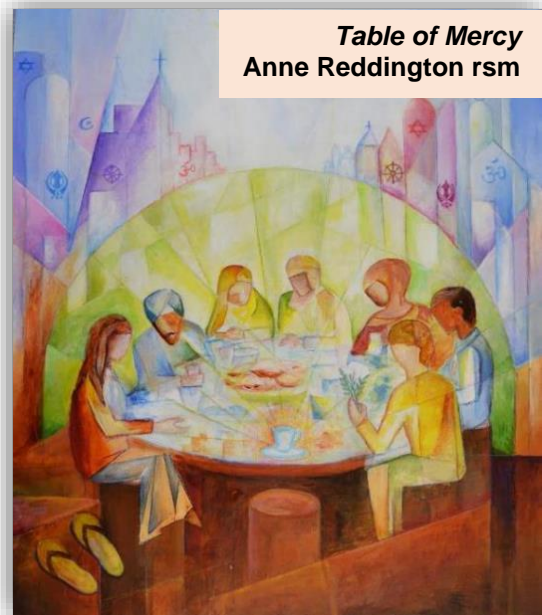
Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus, is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us.
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger.
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter.
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Choose one phrase from this hymn to hold in your heart this week, letting it invite you to grow in the art of encounter. Write a new verse which includes all created beings.



REFLECTIONS FOR THE 22ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 28 August 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

In today's Liturgy of the Word, humility is the theme threaded through all our readings. In our world today, this quality is often confused with devaluing ourselves or being submissive to others or allowing ourselves to be considered inferior to other. Therefore, it is discarded as having any place in our lives. Yet all religious traditions value humility. Let us reflect on how our readings show us "an irony of inverted expectations" when considering the true and valued meaning of this quality of life.



Our first inverted expectation comes from the origin of the word that, in both English ("humility") and Spanish ("humildad"), is the Latin word "humus" which means "earth" or "soil" or "ground." This awareness suggests that we must explore humility beyond simply a human characteristic. Indeed, humility speaks to right relationship – with self, with other humans, with Earth, and with God.

The reading from Sirach today focuses on two of these relationships: with God and with self. Sirach reminds us that we actually learn to be humble from God, "For great is the might of the Lord; but by the humble the Lord is glorified" (Sir 3:20). The writer of Hebrews echoes this in the words which contrast the powerful image of God ("a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them" – Sir 3:18-19) with the image of a humble, approachable God ("the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" – Sir 3:22-23).

Psalms 68 strengthens that image with a God who is the "Father of orphans and protector of widows" (Ps 68:5), who "gives the desolate a home to live in; and leads out the prisoners to prosperity" (Ps 68:6), and who "provided for the needy" (Ps 68:10). This loving, humble God showers rains in abundance and provides a dwelling for the flock (Ps 68:9-10). In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus pleads with us, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt 11:29).



If acting in the image of a humble God is one dimension of our relationship in humility with God, the second one is our praise and thanks to God who creates and sustains us. The psalmist proclaims, "Let the righteous be joyful, let them exult before God; let them be jubilant with joy. Sing to God, sing praises to God's name; lift up a song to God who rides upon the clouds" (Ps 68:3-4). According to Sikhism, all people, equally, have to bow before God so there ought to be no hierarchies among or between people.

The relationship with others in humility is described in the reading from Sirach in which “love is experienced in giving, rather than receiving; greatness is revealed in humility; wisdom is a better listener than talker” (words of John Kavanaugh, sj). In the reading from Luke’s Gospel, Jesus teaches a parable about a meal in which he challenges the guests to not seek the highest places and the host to include those who will not repay for the honour they receive. This sense of inclusion and welcome is at the heart of the relationship of humility. Veronica Lawson rsm explains that Jesus’ parable “embodied the inclusive values of the kin-dom vision that he had preached from the outset. It is confronting for us in our times. It is easy to welcome like-minded people into our land and our homes. It is not so easy to be open to those who see the world differently from us. We are invited to look on them with love rather than hostility and to secure a place for them in our hearts and in our common home.”



Perhaps the best description of the way of humility in our communion with each other comes from the letter to the Colossians, “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect

harmony” (Col 3:12-14). In the words of the Quran, “The servants of the Merciful are those who walk the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, ‘Peace’” (Quran, 25:63).

In our relationship with self, humility does not call for us to demean our gifts or devalue our goodness. Joan Chittister csj reminds us that “Humility is authenticity.” To be humble is to be firmly grounded in knowledge of self, to be rooted in a realistic understanding of who we are as individuals. Monica Kavanaugh says, “By helping us to realize our strengths and reconcile our weaknesses, humility frees us from ‘having to pretend that we are more than, or other than, who we truly are’. In proper practice, humility is said to magnify all other positive attributes.” Every good in yourself is a gift from God and is meant to be given back to the Lord by being shared with others.

Humility is not to deny our talents and gifts but to recognize them and live up to our worth and something greater. It is in the service to others that is the greatest form of humility. The Hindu tradition teaches, “Each human being the Universal, recognizing and feeling oneness with everyone and everything else in the universe, without inferiority or superiority or any other bias, is the mark of humility” (Swami Vivekananda, 19th century).

The prophet Micah brings together the relationship with self, others, and God marked by humility when he proclaims, “God has told you, O mortal, what



is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic 6:8).

The last element of our "inverted expectations" about humility is the realization that humility, flowing from its original root, speaks to our relationship with Earth. We get a hint of this from the first book of Chronicles when God says, "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chron 7:14). Kevin Hall tells us, "Persons, close to Earth, are invited to humility. Earth, the primary element of Life, to which we are naturally close, inspires and influences us with words we have used throughout the centuries to designate and define ourselves." He goes on to say, "The origin of 'humility' is the Latin word 'humus' meaning *soil*, specifically rich, dark, organic soil. When a seed is planted in fertile soil, it transforms into something far greater. When we have sufficient humus in our lives, we grow and develop, and foster those around us to flourish. Humility produces growth."

Rachel Carson, the environmentalist, goes even further and tell us, "It is a wholesome and necessary thing for us to turn again to the Earth and in the contemplation of her beauties to know the sense of wonder and humility."



In his *Markings*, Dag Hammarskjöld says so beautifully, "To have humility is to experience reality, not in relation to ourselves, but in its sacred independence. . . In the point of rest at the center of our being, we encounter a world where all things are at rest in the same way. Then a tree becomes a mystery, a cloud a revelation, each person a cosmos of whose riches we can only catch glimpses. The life of simplicity is simple, but it opens to us a book in which we never get beyond the first syllable."

These words lead us into this coming week when we begin the celebration of the Season of Creation, starting on September 1 and ending on October 4, which Pope Francis defines the Season of Creation as "an opportunity to cultivate our 'ecological conversion.'" The logo for this year's celebration is the burning bush of Exodus 3. This year's theme is "Listen to the Voice of Creation," flowing from the opening words of Psalm 19, "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge...their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the Earth, and their words to the end of the world." (19: 1-4). God's creation moans ever louder and suffers more every day amidst the ongoing climate emergency and biodiversity crisis.

The religious leaders who invite us to this year's season of Creation remind us, "The harmonies that emerge when we contemplate the books of creation and Scripture form our cosmology about who we are, where we are, and how we are called to live in right relationships with God and our co-creatures." The response which we are called to make is one which embraces all the relationships marked by humility: "During the Season of Creation, our common prayer and action can help us listen for the voices of those who are silenced. In prayer we lament the individuals, communities, species, and ecosystems who are lost, and those whose livelihoods are threatened by habitat loss and climate change. In prayer we centre the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor."

The poet, Steve Garnaas-Holmes, helps bring all the threads of our readings and the Season of Creation, intertwined with humility, in this profound prayer-poem:

Wisdom speaks not only to an individual at a party,
but to the human species included in Creation.
Humans have assigned ourselves the place of honor,
the crown of Creation, the pinnacle of evolution;
but we are superfluous, a parasite,
contributing nothing to the food chain.
The world was fine and beautiful without us,
praising God in beauty of movement, song and form,
playing, dancing, loving young ones,
communities performing their symphony of harmony—
and they will still after we are gone.
Wisdom invites us to take the lowest place
at the table of Creation, supporting from beneath,
where feet are washed, and fallen crumbs cherished.
What if we were to serve, not conquer? Bless, not rob?
What might it be like for humanity
to be a doorkeeper in the house of God?
What might we find in the lowest place,
closest to the Creator?

There is much to ponder as we enter, intentionally and humbly, this Season of Creation!



REFLECTIONS FOR THE 31ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 30 November 2022

The Mount, The Residence at Littledale

“For you love all things that exist and detest none of the things that you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it. . . You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living” (Ws 11:24, 26). These words from our first reading set the tone for today’s Liturgy of the Word. God who created the universe and all its creatures loves every one of us, even the most at risk, marginalized or flawed creature.



NASA's James Webb
Space Telescope
Pillars of Creation

Notice the words in the first creation story in the book of Genesis, “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good” (Gen 1:3-4). Once God creates with a word, God sees that every created thing – light (1:4), earth and seas (1:10), vegetation (1:12), lights in the dome (sun, moon, and stars, 1:18), sea creatures and birds (1:21), land creatures (1:25) and humans – every created thing is good. God does not say, “Let there be light, and I declare that the light is good!” As Gregory E Hitzhusen says, “God creates, and then once that thing exists, its goodness becomes apparent to God. This makes it clear that God sees the value and goodness in all of creation.” When, on the sixth day, God sees all that has been created, the text says that God saw that it was “very good” (Gen 1: 31) or “exceedingly good.” Each created being is good; all creation together – the sacred communion of all creation – is exceedingly good!

Reflect on that thought for a moment. God creates you, and immediately looks at you and sees that you are good. Despite your flaws and imperfections, God sees you as good. In the same way, God sees every star, every stone, every waterfall, every ocean, every tree, every flower, every animal, every insect, every bird, every person as good. Our text from Wisdom goes even further, “For your immortal spirit is in all things” (Ws 11:12). God’s spirit is not simply in all humans but in all things.

This theme continues in Psalm 145, “The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and the Lord’s compassion is over all that the Lord has made” (Ps 145:8-9) – over all that the Lord has made. In our pride as humans, for far too long, we have been assuming that this means us only and not all creation. Yet the biblical texts here reference “all things”, all that the Lord has made.”

During this coming week, we will celebrate the feasts of All Saints and All Souls. We have long held as precious “the Communion of Saints” – all of our loved ones gathered in heaven. We slowly began to realize that the Communion of Saints includes all of us living on Earth and connected by a thin veil with our loved ones who have died before us. Now



Angels Unaware, Timothy P. Schmalz

we are beginning to realize that it is truly a Communion of Holy Ones, human and other-than-human, all the beings which God has created and sees as good and loves. How rich our celebration will be this Tuesday in company with this sacred communion of all creation!

In the second letter to the Thessalonians, we humans are reminded by the writer, “We always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of the call and will fulfil by God’s power every good resolve and work of faith” (2 Thess 1:11). God not only creates us and sees us as good, but God continues the act of creating by making us worthy of our call to be good, to do good, to work faithfully. As we hear from the prophet Joel and from Peter’s first homily in the Acts of the Apostles, “God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young ones shall see visions, and your old ones shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Joel 2: 28-29, Acts 2:17-18). All we have to do is accept the Spirit poured out upon us. The letter goes on to give us some comforting words, “we beg you, brothers and sisters, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter” (2 Thess 2:2). Our response is to be one of trust, confidence in the One who creates and sustains us.

There is no surprise then that the Church chooses to place the story of Zacchaeus, found only in the Gospel of Luke, in the context of these readings. We will expect to see one whom God loves, one whom God sustains by the spirit poured out, one who responds with abundant joy to the call to be good. That one, in this story, is Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus, a rich tax collector, is trying to see who Jesus is, but, because he is short in stature, he climbs the sycamore tree to see him.



Sycamore tree, fruit, leaves

This story is so familiar to us. Yet how many of us see the sycamore tree as merely a prop in the story. We fail to see that it is a fundamental element of the story and of the message which it conveys. This tree family of sycamore, in the same family as the common fig tree, has existed on Earth for more than 100 million years. A native central and eastern European tree and one of the seven native species of Israel, it grows largely in hilly or mountainous regions. Its wood was highly valued by the people of Palestine because of its lightness and durability. It is attractive to aphids and, a variety of their predators, such as ladybirds, hoverflies, and birds. The flowers provide a good source of pollen and nectar for bees and other insects, and

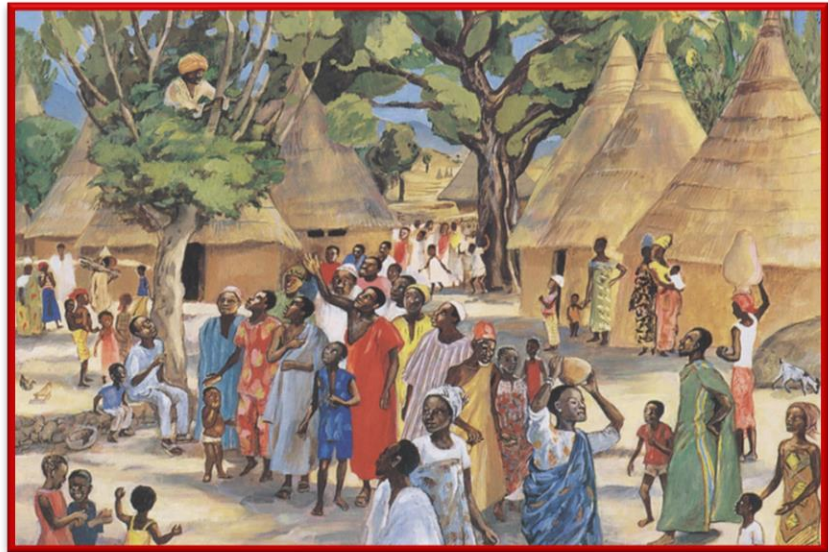
the seeds are eaten by birds and small mammals. Therefore, in Israel, the sycamore tree symbolises strength, protection, reliability, clarity, regeneration, and transformation.

In this story, the writer specifically identifies the sycamore to alert the reader that first clarity will come, then rebirth and transformation. The tree is an active participant in what happens between Jesus and Zacchaeus. Unlike the crowd, the sycamore supports Zacchaeus by giving him the safe place from which to see who Jesus is for him. In his seeing, Zacchaeus becomes transformed. Jesus “looks up to him” (not down on him as the crowds do) and announces that he is coming for a meal! Notice Zacchaeus’ response, “he hurried down and was happy to welcome him” (Lk 19:6). This man, reborn and transformed, promises Jesus that “half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times

as much” (Lk 19:8). Jesus trusts his response and confirms, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham” (Lk 19:9). Pope Francis says this of the story:

It is the encounter between Jesus Christ and the rich tax collector Zacchaeus, as a result of which Zacchaeus made a radical decision of sharing and justice, because his conscience had been awakened by the gaze of Jesus. This same spirit should be at the beginning and end of all political and economic activity. The gaze, often silent, of that part of the human family which is cast off, left behind, ought to awaken the conscience of political and economic agents and lead them to generous and courageous decisions with immediate results, like the decision of Zacchaeus. Does this spirit of solidarity and sharing guide all our thoughts and actions?

Jesus and Zaccheus
Jesus MAFA
Cameroon



The Jesuit retreat director, Philip Chircop, summarizes well the invitation for us in this story, “Journey with Zacchaeus today. Join him in the sycamore tree with eyes wide open and with the ears of your heart, sharpened and fine-tuned ... and listen. Hurry with him down the tree and walk with him, with a pilgrim heart, his path of conversion and radical transformation.” Where is the sycamore tree, the safe place, from which you gaze upon Jesus? How and where and when do you welcome Jesus into your presence?

Veronica Lawson rsm links the conclusion of the story back to the sycamore tree and our need to care for our common home – Earth and all Earth creatures: “Hospitality, joy, haste to respond to divine visitation. Jesus then acts to restore honour to Zacchaeus in the eyes of those who hold him and his kind in contempt. Zacchaeus is affirmed as a true descendant of his forbears in faith. Salvation for our house, our ‘common home’, will only come with comparable attention to what we have despoiled.”

Let us give the last word on this story to Steve Garnaas-Holmes who challenges us in this prayer-poem:

Would I climb a tree to see Jesus?
Would I make a fool of myself to meet God? Embarrass myself, risk humiliation?
(You’re not really in love till you’ve embarrassed yourself.)
What would I dare, or not dare? What would I risk to experience the Holy?

Am I ready for people to talk behind my back? To give away a lot of money?
To allow Jesus to invite himself in, to invade my life,
when I definitely have not cleaned lately?
To commit to a loony scheme that with Jesus could definitely get out of control?
Or do I slip back into the murmuring crowd, all happy to consume me?

God, give me the faith to be gutsy for Jesus.
To be crazy for you, and let others call me so.
To counter the crowd, all those looming opinions around me and inside me.
To follow a voice no one else believes in.
To be uncool for you.
God, give me the lovesick nerve to climb the fool tree.



Jesus and Zaccheus, Artist unknown

REFLECTIONS FOR THE 33RD 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.



REFLECTIONS FOR THE 32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 06 November 2022

The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale

We are coming close to the end of the Church's liturgical year – the third Sunday from today is the first Sunday of Advent. It is not surprising then that today's readings explore the question, "Is there life after death?"

While today we Christians take life after death for granted, even up to the time of Jesus, there were differences of opinion on whether there was life after death. Indeed, for us today, we have diverse views of what life after death looks like – we have imagined a place called heaven, but each one of us has a different image of what heaven looks like. We tend to imagine those things which give us most joy, and we then conclude that heaven is the place where these are fully present. You have heard me say that I do not want to go to heaven unless I can sleep until noon every day and then sit on a loud reading my murder stories for the rest of the day! While your desires may be more sublime than mine, we tend to take the same approach. What we all hold in common is the belief that, once again, we will see our loved ones face to face.

Today's readings caution us to trust that there is life after death but to be less certain about what that might look like. The first reading and the Gospel are bookends, both imagining some dimensions of life after death. The psalm and reading from 2 Thessalonians reflect more on how we prepare ourselves for this moment in our life story.

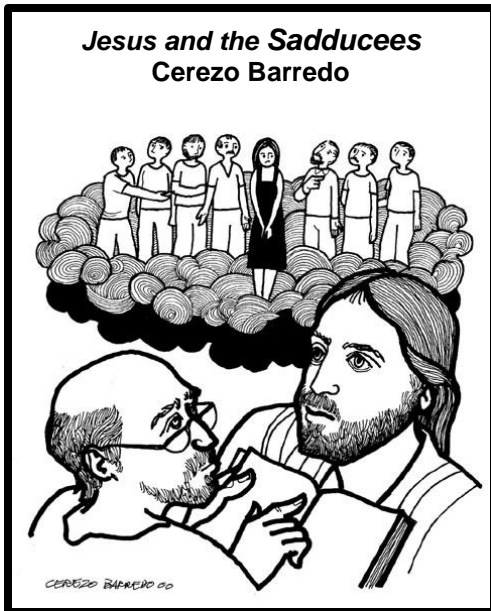
In the first reading from 2 Maccabees, we hear parts of the horrific story of a mother and her seven sons who were tortured and then martyred by order of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Antiochus was a Greek Hellenistic King who ruled the Seleucid Empire (including Judah and Samaria) from 175 BCE until his death in 164 BCE. He issued decrees forbidding many traditional Jewish practices and began a campaign of persecution against devout Jews that led eventually to the Maccabean Revolt. In today's story, the mother and her sons are being cruelly punished for refusing to eat pork that is deemed to be unclean and therefore forbidden by their Jewish religion. Our reading today does not include the following verses which are important to understand the reasoning of the sons and the teaching of their mother:

The mother was especially admirable and worthy of honourable memory. Although she saw her seven sons perish within a single day, she bore it with good courage because of her hope in the Lord. She encouraged each of them in the language of their ancestors. Filled with a noble spirit, she reinforced her woman's reasoning with a man's courage, and said to them, "I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. Therefore, **the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of humankind and devised the origin of all things, will in mercy give life and breath back to you** again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of the laws."

2 Mac 7:20-23



The sons' faithfulness to Torah was repeated by each one before he was martyred as it was here by their mother before she herself is killed. She places their death in the context of creation and of God's creating care for each one, "The Creator of the world will in mercy give life and breath back to you again." This teaching comes at a time when there was not a unanimous belief among the people of Judah that there was life after death. It is one of the few times in the Old Testament that this belief is mentioned with such authority and conviction.



By the time of Jesus, as recorded in Luke's Gospel today, the Pharisees fully believed in resurrection from the dead but the other group of religious leaders, the Sadducees, did not. The Sadducees wanted to trap Jesus by misusing one of the laws to point out an impossible situation if you believed in resurrection. They speak about the woman who has successively married seven brothers in accordance with the Mosaic rule of levirate marriage as prescribed by Deut 25:5.

Jesus avoids this argument saying, "Those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Indeed, they cannot die any more, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection" (Lk 20:35-36). One pastor, Karoline Lewis, says of this comment, "The Kingdom of God has something more in mind than the patriarchy that imprisons women now. No, women will not continue to be

property. Women will not continue to be owned. Women will not continue to be passive in their place in society."

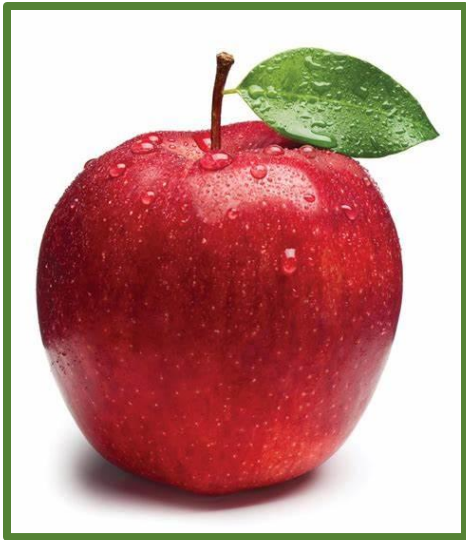
Jesus goes on to say, "The fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now God is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to God all of them are alive" (Lk 20:37-38). We have no idea what life after death will look like – it is transformation beyond our present imagination. But we know with certainty that the God who calls us into life and into relationship continues in relationship with us beyond death into whatever new life will mean. For God, the relationship that began with creation never ends.

Elizabeth Johnson csj adds something of what that means for our relationships with those whom we love but who have died, "Hoping against hope, we affirm that they [our loved ones who have died] have fallen not into nothingness but into the embrace of the living God. And that is where we can find them again; when we open our hearts to the silent calmness of God's own life in which we dwell, not by selfishly calling them back to where we are, but by descending into the depth of our own hearts where God also abides."

Ron Rolheiser omi describes "heaven" in a most poignant but beautifully expressed way:

In the Gospels, Galilee is the place where, for the most part, the good things happen. It's the place where the disciples first meet Jesus, where they fall in love with him, where they commit themselves to him, and where miracles happen. Galilee is the place where Jesus invites us to walk on water. Galilee is the place where the disciples' souls enlarge and thrive.

And that is also a place for each of our deceased loved ones. In each of their lives, there was a Galilee, a place where their persons and souls were most alive, where their lives radiated the energy and exuberance of the divine. When we look at the life of a loved one who has died we need to ask: Where was she most alive? What qualities did she, most-uniquely, embody and bring into a room? Where did she lift my spirit and make me want to be a better person? Name those things, and you will have named your loved one's Galilee – and you will also have named the Galilee of the Gospels, namely, that place in the heart where Jesus invites you to meet him. And that is too where you will meet your loved ones in the communion of saints. Don't look for a live person in a cemetery. She's not there. She's in Galilee. Meet her there.



Psalms 17 gives us the sense of hope and confidence in our lives today which becomes even more real after our death, "Guard me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings, As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness" (Ps 17:8, 15). The writer of 2 Thessalonians echoes this confidence which endorses our belief that "God is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive" by pouring out this blessing upon us, "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word. . . May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ" (2 Thess 2:16-17, 3:5).

Last week we celebrated the feasts of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. This coming Friday we celebrate Remembrance Day. In the embrace of those wonderful moments of synchronicity, God's surprises, today's readings help us understand that we find those who have died "by descending into the depth of our own hearts where God also abides." This sense of the connection in love between us and those who have gone before us is echoed in this prayer-poem by Jan Richardson:

When the wall between the worlds
is too firm, too close.
When it seems all solidity and sharp edges.
When every morning you wake
as if flattened against it,
its forbidding presence
fairly pressing the breath
from you all over again.
Then may you be given a glimpse
of how weak the wall
and how strong what stirs on the other side,
breathing with you and blessing you
still forever bound to you
but freeing you into this living, into this world
so much wider than you ever knew.



REFLECTIONS FOR THE FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING ~ THE REIGN OF CHRIST
The Mount ~ The Residence at Littledale
20 November 2022

Today we celebrate the Reign of Christ or the Feast of Christ the King, a relatively new feast in the Church's calendar, given to us by Pope Pius XI in 1925 and moved to the last Sunday of the liturgical year in 1970. The earliest this feast can occur is November 20 (as it does this year). It was created in response to the growth of secularism and to the dissension between Italy and the Vatican about the political control of Rome and the Vatican. Today, we continue to celebrate this feast but now with a new understanding and awareness. Indeed, the initial reason for the establishment of the feast, our understanding of Jesus as King, and the readings in the Liturgy of the Word are all cloaked in paradox.

A paradox is a statement or idea that seems to contradict itself, runs counter to our expectations. It is a combination of the ancient Greek words, *para* ("beyond) and *dokein* ("to think"). Combined, *paradoxos* or paradox, means "beyond thinking." A literary paradox is an idea that forces us to think beyond the normal, the expected. While it appears to contradict itself, upon further exploration, it reveals a deeper meaning. Let us explore some of the paradoxes inherent in today's feast and scripture readings.

Our usual image of a king is that of a man of power, wealth, and political control, attained not by the choice of the people but either from inheritance or by warfare. In ancient times, once the king was crowned he became the favoured of the gods and, in some cultures, actually became a god. The first reading today introduces us to King David, certainly the most powerful and important king of the Israelites. Yet the reading from 2 Samuel undermines most of this imagery.



The people declare that David is one of them, "we are your bone and flesh" (2 Sam 5:1) – there is nothing extraordinary about him. God says, "It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel" (2 Sam 5:2). Remember that the shepherd was the lowliest worker in the society – poor, did not own the flock he tended, worked day and night in an environment of all kinds of weather at high risk from thieves and wild animals, dressed poorly, and smelled like the sheep and goats he tended. This is a paradoxical image for certain – a king whose job description is a shepherd. And the third paradox of this reading is that the king is

chosen by the people in a covenantal relationship and is anointed by the elders to the position.

Psalms 122 is one of the "Psalms of Ascent" – psalms recited by the people as they go to Jerusalem and to the Temple ("the house of the Lord") for the three pilgrimage festivals; Passover (*Pesach*), Weeks or Pentecost (*Shavuot*), and Tabernacles or Tents (*Sukkot*) – all festivals linked to the harvest. The pilgrimage to Jerusalem was a time for giving thanks to God, the one who provides the fruits of the harvest, ensures life for the people. This God is the true king who binds the city and the people together. The next three verses in the psalm which are not sung or read today pray for peace for Jerusalem, "may they who love you prosper" (Ps 122:6). Our God who is king is not about warfare and violence but about peace and good and gladness.

The reading from the letter to the Colossians continues that theme of thanksgiving to the one who gives life to all of us, “Give thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light” (Col 1:12). The Father introduces us to the Son, one who is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col 1:15). This takes us to yet another dimension of understanding of what being a king means, “in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him” (Col 1:16). This creating king, this ruler of the cosmos, also brings peace not by warfare but through suffering – “through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20).



Christ between the two Thieves
Macha Chmakoff

The greatest paradox lies in the Gospel reading – indeed, a number of paradoxes. Jesus is dying on the cross, being mocked by the leaders of the people, by the soldiers, and by a criminal dying beside him. The leaders of the people say that, because he is “the Messiah of God, his chosen one” (Lk 23:35), he should save himself. The soldiers say that, because he is “the King of the Jews” (Lk 23:37) even written in the inscription over him, he should save himself. The criminal says, “Are you not the Messiah” (Lk 23:39) and, therefore, able to save himself and the other two criminals. The very ones who mock Jesus reinforce the meaning of his name (Jesus in Hebrew means “the Lord saves”) and give him his titles: “Messiah of God,” “God’s chosen one,” “king of the Jews,” “Messiah”).

The one in the scene who does not mock is the second criminal. This criminal acknowledges his guilt for the crime for which he is being punished and then pleads, calling Jesus not by his formal titles but personally and intimately by his own name, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Lk 23:42). This

criminal has no doubt that Jesus will become the king but not a king who controls – he is a king who “remembers.” And Jesus, the one who chooses not to save himself, saves this man who repents, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43). While the second criminal would have been blessed for the remembering to come in the future, Jesus responds immediately, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” Jesus and the criminal have begun this journey in suffering, will continue it in death, and will enter new life together. The kingdom has become the kin-dom!

Jesus’ promise of “today” echoes other times when the writer of Luke’s Gospel announces a new moment in understanding. In Luke 2:11, the angels announce to the shepherds, “to you is born today in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord”. In Luke 4:21, Jesus begins his public ministry with his teaching in the synagogue, “He began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’” In Luke 19:9, Jesus tells the gathered crowds that Zacchaeus has begun a new life, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham.”

The pastor, Karoline Lewis, adds, “In Jesus, we have a king who is crucified. Second, we have a king who forgives the very people who have secured his death. Third, we have a king who, while

Jesus and the Good Thief
Lynne Kiefer Kobvleck



hanging on his cross, grants salvation to the criminal on the cross next to him (unique to Luke's passion narrative). And fourth, we have a king who brings the condemned into Paradise with him rather than bring upon them further condemnation. One of the primary characteristics of our king is a commitment to solidarity with and in our suffering." From our growing understanding of "deep incarnation," we know that this "king" continues to be in solidarity with and suffers with all created beings, human and other-than-human.

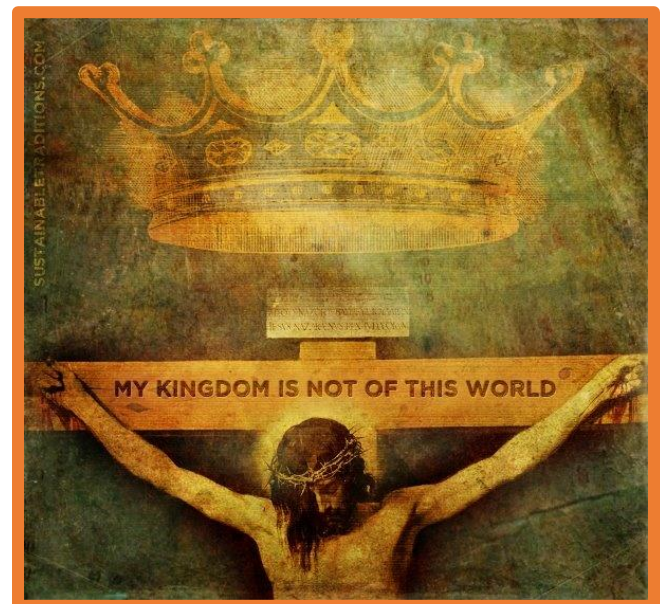
Veronia Lawson rsm adds, "The title of today's feast reminds us of the boundless nature of God's rule or reign: we celebrate Christ Jesus as ruler of the universe, of all that is and of all that will be. As our understanding of the universe expands, we find ourselves caught up in the ever creative and saving presence of a compassionate, merciful God who has been revealed to us in Jesus of Nazareth."

The image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, the one in whom all things in heaven and earth were created – the king we celebrate today – is the Jesus dying, being mocked, cursed, and laughed at, the one who gives hope to one who is being crucified with him. To add to the paradox, next Sunday, the first Sunday of Advent, we will begin our movement to Christmas when this king comes as a little child, born to a young teenager far from home, born into a refugee family, facing homelessness to avoid another king's wrath.

We conclude our contemplation of this paradox with today's paradoxes echoed in a poem-prayer from Thom Shuman:

Gathering God:
when we have only a few pennies of hope
in our pockets,
you multiply us into a blessing.
When the world whispers seductively to us,
you tell us of your joy for us.
When everyone has forgotten
even who we are,
you shout out our name with delight:
"My Beloved!"

Dawn from on high:
when we would divide people by class,
by race, by age,
you cast your lot with the outcasts of society.
When we get lost from the muddled directions
the world gives us,
you lead us down that path called Peace.

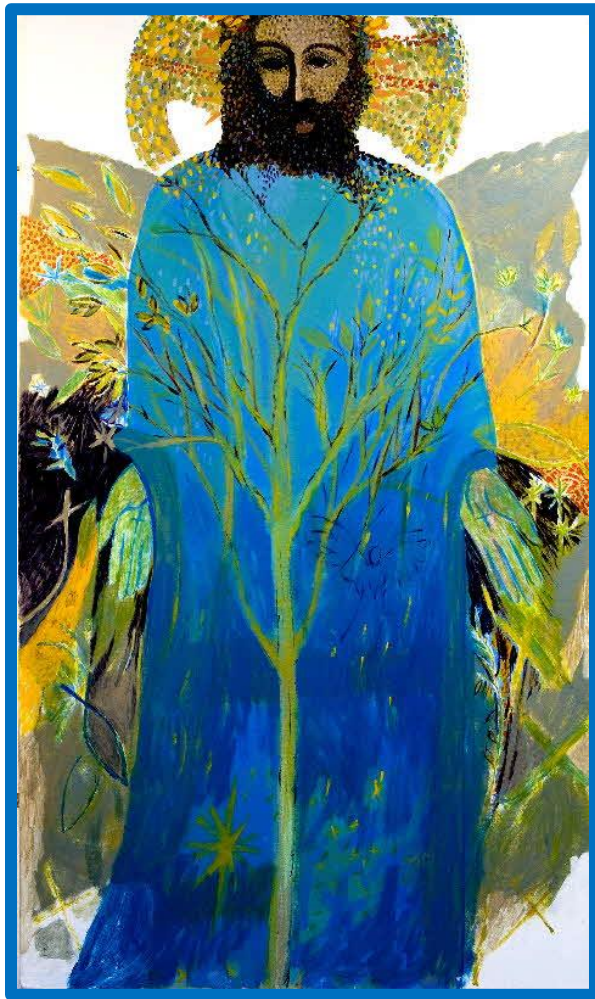


Spirit of wisdom:

when we grow impatient with all the trivial matters of life, you surround us with serenity.
When the world puts us on the route to sin,
you transfer us to the streets of the kin-dom.

God in Community, Holy in One, we trust that you will remember us.

With these words, “we trust that you will remember us,” we bring our old church year to a close and move to begin a new church year filled with hope and promise and possibility. Like the many paradoxes of this feast day, the paradoxes of our own lives will unfold with new meaning in this kin-dom that we share with the sacred communion of all creation.



Christ the King, Janet Melrose

In this painting, see the symbols of Christ's overflowing life and love:

- ❖ hands outstretched both to welcome us and send us out again
- ❖ “living water” to refresh and renew us
- ❖ a tree of life whose leaves are for healing
- ❖ an angel to remind us God always has a message for us
- ❖ fish aplenty, like the fish we are to bring in as the first disciples did, like the fish of that resurrection breakfast on the seashore
- ❖ stars – for Bethlehem, and for Christ the Dayspring from on High to shine in our hearts

On this feast of the Reign of Christ, let us ponder anew the question:

Who do you say that I am?