

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer

I would like to share with you the story that is found in today's meditation in the FORWARD DAY BY DAY.

"Years ago, my sister's car was hit head-on by a truck that jumped the median. People stopped to call 911 and put their hands on the car, praying that the woman trapped inside would live. The men who brought the Jaws of Life, the crew in the rescue helicopter, her doctors, and therapists all played critical roles; so did her family and friends. Every day of her five months of rehabilitation, dinner for her family appeared in the "magic ice chest" on the front porch, filled by a rotating team of friends from all the corners of her life."

He goes on to remind us that "Jesus needs laborers for the harvest to take care of the myriad of tasks of bringing life to others. Jesus asks us to be those laborers".

Today's gospel reading is a clarion call. Jesus says to his disciples: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." It is during this season of the Church, Pentecost, that we are reminded of our calling and as written in Paul's Letter to the Church in Rome, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit." Our charge, our sacred trust is to take this love and go out into this world and serve the lord and the "harassed and the helpless."

The sister that was severely injured in the car wreck would later "return to her role as one of Jesus' laborers as an art teacher who collaborates on art/faith retreats with her church community and volunteers to do art with inner-city children."

The Holy Spirit has endowed each of us with special, unique gifts, attributes to be shared with those who may need just what we have. "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. ⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,^[a] and to still another the interpretation of tongues.^[b]¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."

Regardless of the gifts that we have been given, we are charged with sharing those gifts with others, to elevate their lives, ease their suffering, to replace despair with hope and joy. Sister Diane Bergant describes it this way: "Give as we have been given...we must be the healing touch of Christ in the world. We must comfort those who mourn, bring back to life those who are in despair, embrace those who have been ostracized by society, drive out anger and fear and hatred. We must heal the rifts in our own families, in our own communities, and in our

workplaces. We have been reconciled with God so that others can be reconciled through us. The Kingdom of God has been opened to us; now we must lead others into it with us.”

It seems like every generation has been confronted with wars and civil unrest and divisiveness. And these times are no different. It has been recorded that America has been at war 93% of the time – 222 out of 239 years – since 1776. Jesus reminds us of these times. He tells us that “you will hear of wars and rumors of wars” but He also says that we are not to be troubled. Too many times we wonder why not? And where is God in all of this mess? “God, why don’t you do something?”

The following story is from an unknown source. “One day a young woman was walking home from work when she saw a sight a little girl standing on the street corner, begging. The little girl’s clothes were paper thin and dirty, her hair matted and unclean, and her cheeks red from the cold.

The young woman dropped a few coins in the begging bowl, gave the girl a smile and walked on. As she walked she started to feel guilty. How could she go home to her warm house with its full pantry and well supplied wardrobe while this little girl shivered on the street.

The young woman also began to feel angry, angry with God. She let her feeling be known in a prayer of protest. “God, how can you let these sort of things happen? Why don’t you do something to help this girl?”

And then, to her surprise God answered. He said, “I did do something. I created you.”

The Holy Spirit is alive and well and working overtime, working in and through us and working in and through that person who will walk up to you, out of the blue, but when you need that confrontation the most, and your life, at that moment, will never be the same. And it is at that moment that we realize why God created us.

The right words at the right time. The pat on the back or a long embrace. A moment in silent listening. Time spent together when no words are exchanged. Those ineffable minutes in which the Holy Spirit is weaving a web connecting us to each other.

Being a laborer for Christ requires a compassionate spirit. It means to be patient with others as well as patient with ourselves. Mary Cox Garner’s “The Hidden Soul of Words”, in defining the word “compassion”, reminds us “it is not possible to be loving, kind, or compassionate towards others unless we are first aware of our own value and, as a result, treat ourselves with respect and loving benevolence. The more tender our own hearts become to ourselves, the more they reach out to others”.

Remember that before we can go in peace to love and serve the Lord, to feed the lambs and tend the sheep, we must be sure that our own hearts are at peace and at one with the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray in the words of Benedict:

May God bless you with a restless discomfort
about easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships,

so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart.

PAUSE

May God bless you with holy anger at injustice, oppression,
and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for
justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

PAUSE

May God bless you with the gift of tears to shed with those who suffer
from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may
reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

PAUSE

May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that
you really CAN make a difference in this world, so that you are able,
with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.

And the blessing of God the Supreme Majesty and our Creator,
Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word who is our brother and Saviour,
and the Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Guide, be with you
and remain with you, this day and forevermore.

AMEN.

a four-fold benedictine blessing - sr. ruth marlene fox, osb - 1985