

## **Liturgy of the Word Reflection**

### **Wednesday, April 22, 2020**

“God so loved the world ...” We hear these words at the beginning of today’s Gospel from John. In this second week of the Easter season, we continue to be called to be an Easter people, people of the Resurrection. Today this invitation is probably one of the most challenging ones to accept.

In the first reading from the *Acts of the Apostles*, we hear of the apostles, like Jesus, being teachers in the temple. These individuals could not be held back and they responded to the call to teach. Yet, this did not meet with acceptance from those in authority as the apostles were arrested and put in jail. Then the angel that appeared carried out God’s plan and became an angel of deliverance. The apostles were freed and, responding to their call, they returned to teaching in the temple.

I find myself reflecting on who our teachers are, and who, like us, are called to teach in the broad sense of that word and that vocation. At the Coordinating Council last weekend, we were invited to reflect on stories of people who spoke or took action with boldness. I listened as the members of the Coordinating Council spoke names of some of our women and also contemporary men and women who were not afraid to speak truth to power. I heard the name of Greta Thurnberg who challenges us to be attentive to the environment. I heard the names of governors who, in this challenging time, are not afraid to make decisions in the best interests of the people, often unpopular decisions that are challenged by other leaders. In all of this, I wonder how will I, how will we, be the teachers today, the voices that cannot be silenced.

In the Gospel reading from John, we hear how the light has come into the world, overcoming darkness. This light of Christ is what we need and in that light, we come to know the truth of God’s love. The apostles saw the light and responded to the invitation to continue to teach and proclaim truth amidst the darkness. As Easter people, we are called to bear the light of Christ and to live the life of faith, the life of light, goodness and truth.

I continue my walks in the morning and, when I start out, darkness enfolds me. Yet, as I return home, the light of day is emerging. In so many ways, darkness surrounds us as we face the global pandemic. All around us is darkness as thousands are suffering from COVID-19 and thousands die as a result of this virus. It is very difficult to see any light, yet that is our call as Easter people. What hint of light do we see? I see the light in our health care workers, the housekeepers and those who continue to serve us. Hundreds of people are making masks, one way in which they feel connected and a way in which they can contribute at this difficult time. I am sure we can think of many other ways people are bringing that light of Christ.

Several years ago, I traveled to South Africa to visit our sisters. This was at a time of challenge for our world community. Judy Coyle took Pat (McCluskey) and me to visit a local artist. She felt the world was upside down and every piece of sculpture was a woman or man standing on his/her head. That is an image that returns to me as we face the global reality of today – our world is turned upside down. I continue to pray and wonder with women religious what our call is at this time. To use the title of a song we often sing, “How then shall we live?” What will our lives look like three months from now? Six months from now?

Today we also mark Earth Day – a day that we were going to celebrate as we mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this occasion. I encourage us in our rooms and in our homes to take time to celebrate the gift of our Earth and our connection with one another. During this time of the pandemic, we realize how deeply our bodies, social ties, the economic system, consumer culture, etc. are connected to the environment and other human beings. Knowing that we desire to find ways to celebrate this day, a website was created: *Take 10 for the Planet*. When you have time today, you might want to pull up that site and watch some of the videos that remind us how blessed we are and that also help us to recognize the challenges we face as a global community, one with Earth.

I wonder what nature is teaching us at this critical time. As I sit at my desk at home and look out the window, I see barren trees and what may appear to be a lifeless scene. Yet, as I look more closely, I can see buds on the trees. I know that in a month or two the trees will be covered with leaves and the same scene will come alive with life. So it is with our time of darkness now. Our call as Easter people is to see the buds of new life around us amidst the sickness and death.

The tomb could not hold Jesus bound; the apostles could not be contained in the jail; this empty Chapel is only temporary. So, too, we cannot be held by the darkness around us. COVID-19 cannot hold us. As with Jesus and the apostles, the invitation is to let our lives teach. Let us be messengers of hope in this time of darkness. Who is the angel that will come to us, free us and give us the courage to speak? In a recent *Give Us This Day*, the person identified as “Blessed Among Us” is a Jesuit African-American theologian, Engelbert Mveng. The quote from his writings is an invitation to us: “The vocation of human beings on earth is to ensure the victory of life over death.”

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