

Homily for Wednesday, Oct. 21, 2020—29th Week of Ordinary Time

Texts: Ephesians 3:2-12, Luke 12:39-48

Sue Rakoczy IHM

The readings today invite us into depth—going deeper—into understandings that we may take for granted. How do we experience “the mystery of Christ?” What does it mean to be “good servants?”

In the section from Ephesians that we hear today, Paul refers to “pagans” twice. “Pagans” are generally understood as “unbelievers” but the word really meant those who lived in rural areas, without the sophistication of urban dwellers. For the Jews (and Paul was first a Jew), the pagans were outside the Covenant, as far away from God as one could imagine. Yet, now they share in the mystery of Christ. And we also are those “pagans” (unless someone here has Jewish ancestry; we are outside the inheritance. But now we are invited to enter and experience the mystery of Christ—we are part of the body of Christ—no longer strangers and outcasts.

But now that we are within the family of Christ, who are we? Luke tells us that we are *servants*. This is not an enviable title since “servant” connotes someone who is of a low class, not taken into account, working in the homes of the wealthy and of course, in all cultures, women are seen as servants.

The title of our congregation, Sisters *Servants* of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, is so familiar to us that we probably slide easily over the word “servant.” And we are servants of Mary under the title of her Immaculate Heart. These are difficult and challenging images.

Luke describes the good and faithful servant as one who does the “master’s” bidding and takes care of the household and what it contains. The servant is watchful and careful. And the servant will be rewarded if her vigilance keeps the household safe.

As Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, what have we been asked to watch and guard? It is the mystery of Christ, of which Mary, as mother of Jesus, lived in an extraordinarily profound way. She taught her son well. When we read the account of the washing of the feet of the disciples in John 13, we see echoes of what Mary taught her son—in her household everyone served each other.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary of our title can be interpreted in many ways. I suggest that we consider “immaculate” as “single-hearted.” The Immaculate Mary is the singer of the Magnificat: she is a prophet of justice and right relationships. Her heart is focused on the needs of the world, of everyone, of all of creation.

So, we, once “pagans” but now members of the Body of Christ, can rejoice in the title of “servant” since it joins us to Mary and her Son—servants of the deep and unfathomable mystery of God lived out in this 21st century of immense challenges.