

ST. JOSEPH SPIRITUAL MINISTRIES
A Congregation Ministry
of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston



Staying Connected in this Uncertain Time

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious has called all of us to be more “attentive to deeper invitations.” As we carry on here at SJSM in remote locations, we are taking some contemplative time to reflect on how God has personally sustained us during past difficulties. May we notice the ways God is present and active with each of us during this horrific, global crisis.

“Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies...” John 12:24

“Whoever wishes to save her life will lose it, but whoever loses her life for my sake will find it.”

Matthew 16:25

In the course of my years of reflecting upon Scripture, these two passages have become pivotal in my understanding of who Jesus is, and what is asked of us, if we want to be disciples of his.

The first phrase, from the Gospel of John, was easier for me to accept, on its own. Yes, of course, a seed must fall into the ground in order for it to produce some fruit. But, if one looks at a fuller portion of the passage, we see that Jesus is speaking about himself. Not only that, he follows up with a proclamation that pretty much issues a challenge to all of us. A difficult challenge.

John 12: 20-25

Now there were some Greeks among those who had come up to worship at the feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we would like to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life.

And then, there’s the passage from the Gospel of Matthew. Same challenge, worded even more bluntly. And Jesus rebukes Peter for not getting the picture!

Matthew 16: 21-25

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. Then Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, “God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you.” He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.”

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

I had several go-rounds with this passage, ending up with confusion and frustration. Then, I was reading a book (sorry, I can’t remember which one, I think it was by the author of *The Bridges of Madison County!*) – it was a love story. In it, the man says to the woman, “Give me all of you, and when we are through, I will give you back yourself.” (Or something close to this.) In prayer, I heard God saying this to me, with a slightly different emphasis. “Give me all of you, and when we are through, I will give you back your Self.” It became clear to me that what Jesus was offering was an invitation, not a challenge. If I

could trust him enough to give over my life to him, he would give me back my essence, my Best Self. A good chunk of my spiritual life since then has been about deepening my capacity to do that.

These days, we are all being asked to “die to self” at least a little bit. Some of us are going to heroic lengths despite fear for their own well-being, and that of the families to whom they go home.

One of the things I have been doing at home is taking care of some plants. I had done some cuttings, and they were rooting. So, last week, I took some of them and planted them in small pots. I hope they will “take,” and I can provide some plants for the rooms in our new Spirituality Center at Walnut Park. My sister asked me about one pot in particular...here is a photo. Yes, that one yellow leaf looks like it's gone by, but it has a strong root and I am expecting a new, soft green shoot will soon come through the dirt.

This is a picture of my life right now, pared down, simple, not perfect, but expectant.

Blessings, blessings to you all!
Beverly

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