

Sept. 30, 2020
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Today we are at a moment of transition. We're in a new season and on the brink of a new month. "October" certainly carries more of the feel of autumn.

It's harvest time when we celebrate the abundance of gardens and fields. With shorter days and longer, darker evenings, it moves some into a more quiet and inner-directed time.

For others, this season of fruitfulness, is one of deeper gratitude since we look with gratefulness at all that has blessed us in the past months. ...

Well, it *used* to feel more like that.

Living in the time of COVID-19, political angst and the struggle for equality has put some brush strokes of further complexity on the canvas of those *usual* feelings.

These days we may feel more in common with Job, one, as a Scripture scholar notes: "who must live long within the dark cloud of mystery, in order to learn the way of *faith and humility* before God. ... Yet, once *we* have *learned* to recognize the interior groaning's of the Spirit ... and to be inwardly at peace with hopes as yet unfulfilled, *then* God calls us ... to *summon* all of our human talents and to *seize* the opportunity to *act* with prudence and courage." [Carroll Stuhlmueller, Biblical Meditations]

What inspires me in this quote is the combination of patient waiting, inner reflection that leads to a *necessary* learning ... and *then* gives the impetus into studied action.

I am still pondering acting with "prudence *and* courage."

Doesn't that sound like something Ruth Bader Ginsburg would have supported? We continue to honor her by acting with her kind of integrity, focus, persistence, compassion and "dissent" when necessary.

Now in the Gospel, Jesus tells those who wish to be his disciples, to be ready for situations that call for courage and even martyrdom.

These moments are not the daily fare of life, thankfully. Yet, such *acutely* painful moments come to each disciple at some time. And we remember them.

The questions are:

- Do we recognize the interior movements of the Spirit when they do come?
- Do we let anxieties or fears hold us back from even small yet consequential actions done with "prudence and courage."
- Do we take such steps that could bring some reconciliation, harmony, or understanding into the situation?

Thomas Merton once wrote: "It is *not* complicated to lead the spiritual life. But it *is* difficult."

As those called in the Gospel gave their "but let me first" lines, Jesus says, "... **you**, GO and proclaim the kingdom of God."

So, let's ask for the grace to listen deeply and to respond to the promptings of the Spirit in our very daily, ordinary lives. Listen. Learn. Act.

Finally, a final word of wisdom from this autumn season.

We pray:

*When I refuse to wait with the mystery of the unknown,
- wrap me in the darkening days of autumn and encourage me
to wait patiently for clarity and vision
as I live with uncertainty and insecurity.

When I cling to control and fight the changes of unwanted, unsought events,
- place me on the wings of birds flying south
as they risk the journey onward.

Generous God of the Seasons, thank you for all that this autumn Gospel teaches.

Amen.

* Adapted from Joyce Rupp, *Journey through the Seasons*