

Reflection for Nov. 18, 2020

Monica Stuhldreier, IHM

The Gospel today is Luke's version of a similar parable we heard on Sunday by Matthew. The story reveals that we need to work with our talents; unless we give them to God and our neighbor in service, we will lose them. As Richard Rohr sums it up: "Share it or lose it!" But I would rather focus on the first reading. I was struck by the first reading today from the Book of Revelation. It shares one of John's visions of the end times in which he uses much symbolic language as he describes the throne of God and all that surrounds it.

But the part that struck me, personally, was "in the center there were four living creatures covered with eyes in front and back ... the first creature resembled a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like that of a man, and the fourth looked like an eagle in flight."

These images brought me right downstairs to our Maxis Community Room, to the wall to the right as you enter the room where you find these images, symbols of the four evangelists. There, if you have noticed, is a beautiful mosaic, a gift that was given to the community way back in the early '60s when our sisters, Johnice and Elizabeth, had turned the room into the Pius XII Religious Education Center. It was the time right before the Vatican II Council when there was much research being done by scholars on the Scripture and as a result, on the new catechetical approach that was the work of Josef Jungman; it was a very biblical approach to religious education, called the "Good News" approach, featuring Salvation history (the wonderful works of God) rather than the *obligation* approach that had been used before for many of us with the catechism. (If you want to get to heaven you *must* do ...)

This was way back when I was a postulant and novice. These sisters had gathered all kinds of new books, artwork and film strips that used this new Good News approach. A few years later, the Pius XII Catechetical Center was moved to Detroit at the request of Cardinal Dearden so the classes would be available to the priests, other religious orders and laity as they prepared to teach the new, more biblical approach to religious education following the Vatican Council, a whole new way of looking at Church and to respond to this Good News!

But getting back to the mosaic. What were pictured in this mosaic were the four living creatures of the Book of Revelation. You will find the images of the four evangelists of the New Testament: the lion, the lion of Judah, was Mark (suggesting courage and the royalty of Jesus); the ox, those often used in sacrifice, suggested Luke, who revealed Jesus' life of sacrifice; then there was the face like that of a man, which was Matthew who told of the incarnation of Jesus, his humanity; and finally we see the eagle in flight suggesting John, whose message seemed to soar into the heavens. It was a lofty message; consider the prologue of John's Gospel, that first chapter and of course this Book of Revelation.

This mosaic remained here because it was attached to the wall. When the Pius XII Catechetical Center moved to Detroit, Sisters Johnice and Elizabeth hoped to be able to offer classes and degrees in religious education. The mosaic stayed as a remnant of the origins of the very important work of these sisters. Their work was an important opportunity to prepare the staffs of parishes in the archdiocese for the new catechetics. Their ministry lasted a number of years and was very significant in making the Detroit Archdiocese one of the leaders in bringing the new understandings of Vatican II alive in our Church. I was blessed to be in the first class that graduated with a degree from Pius XII through the University of Detroit.

It might be good if you looked carefully at this mosaic when you next enter the Maxis Community Room to see the images that symbolize the four evangelists.

I thought it interesting that John describes these four living creatures, our evangelists, "with eyes in the front and back" suggesting to us as they are the ones who SEE. They see the deeper realities, of God's realm, truths that tell us of God's marvelous deeds, God's great love for us, God's people. These Gospels from four different views remain with us, treasures ever revealing their good news in deeper ways as we contemplate them on our daily faith journeys.

We see them today calling us to give praise, glory, honor and thanks to the ONE sitting on the throne who lives forever. "Worthy are You, Lord our God to receive glory, honor and praise for you created all things!"

As we continue now in November to remember those who have gone before us, those God has used with their gifts and talents to bring the Good News afresh, let us give thanks for all our sisters (and for me, Johnice and Elizabeth) who have helped deepen our own journey of Faith in a profound way. Praise, love, thanksgiving to our God!