

October 20, 2021

By Annette St-Amour IHM

Luke 12: 39-48

Entering into these final weeks of the church year brings us back to daily scriptures with forewarnings of the final coming. In various ways, we are reminded to be on guard, to be ready.

The readings remind me of RCIA groups I worked with in South Africa. We sat on the small backless church benches that we brought outside of the church forming a circle for our weekly sessions. There were usually about 15 in the group. Every year, we had a few older men join the group. One of our beginning sessions was always sharing the stories with one another of what drew them to become a part of the faith community. Almost every year, one of the men would say something like, "My wife and family have been involved in church, but I was not interested. But now, that I am older and looking back at my life, I want to prepare to meet my Maker." I want to be ready. I want to belong to the Church.

Once, one of the old men, a practicing 7th Day Adventist said, "I had a dream of my ancestors telling me I should go to the Catholic Church and belong there, so that is why I am here." An 18-year-old girl chimed in and said, "That is why I am here. I had a dream too, and the ancestors were telling me to come to the Catholic Church." People took dreams and messages from the Ancestors quite seriously.

Their ancestors served as their guardians and showed them the way. Most of them were faithful to the process. All were baptized with great celebration at the Easter Vigil, a night of promise and hope.

Our readings today speak more of warnings, yet we are people of hope, trusting in our beloved God. The Psalm gives us assurance, "Our help is in the name of the Lord". "We were rescued from the fowler's snare." Perhaps, it is a time of recalling how God has been there for us throughout our lives. What are some of the perils that God has already led us through in our lives? Who were some of our guides along the way? Name a few and again give thanks.

That awareness can give us new courage for attending to what is surrounding us, the anxieties we feel today, for the divisions of what is happening in our society, the endless down pulls, the dishonesty, the loss of the sense of a common good for so many, the grief we feel at the loss of family and friends, and the isolation of the pandemic and other stresses in our lives. Name them, hold them with the pain, be gentle with yourself, be compassionate with yourself. This enables you to be all the more compassionate with others, reflecting the 'justice of God', merciful and compassionate.

The Gospel today is a call for integrity, being responsible servants, obedient servants to justice, as this Gospel speaks of in the role of distributing food to the other servants. Carroll Stuhlmeuller enlightens us in his commentary for today reminding us that as “obedient servants to justice” in whom the risen Christ lives, we are true to our most inward self, to our authentic personality, to our image of God before creation, the most wonderful possibilities of our life in God’s dreams for us. Also, Christ is rising to new life in other people, and places where we would never suspect it to happen”. We can never despair.

When naming and considering our anxieties, let us place them in this context of God’s transforming presence within ourselves, within others, and in our world and events that seem to potentially overwhelm us. Do what you can in your everyday encounters, be just, and place it all in the saving power of God and trust, in the words of the Psalm “Our help is in the name of the Lord”.