

Paula Cooney, Reflection  
August 28, 2024  
2 Thes 3:6-10, 16-18 / Mt 23:27-32

Who then shall we be?

According to Paul, we need to keep away from anyone living in idleness and if they won't work, then don't feed them either.

And the passage from Matthew finds us amid Jesus' list of woes.  
– not a very inspirational and encouraging scripture passage to say the least.

So – where to go?

Well, one direction is the Saint of the day, Augustine of Hippo whose conversion and impact on the Church is well known and the other was to take a deep breath and listen beyond the words of the gospel to what they might be inviting us to.

First the scripture:

Because of the ministry I have as Commissary for the Servants of Jesus, I was privileged to attend the recent LCWR Assembly. Perhaps some of you were able to connect with the presentations that are available by livestream. The theme, "Our time is holy. Who then shall we be?" permeated all aspects of our time. The three lay women who were asked to respond to that question were blunt and direct:

- Be who you are
- Be the ballast – the moral conscience of the Church
- Be witness to human suffering –
- Call the questions that need to be called
- Be joyful
- Be opinionated
- Risk radical inclusion
- Provide safe places for those who have no place to go
- Be the prophetic voice you are called to be

There aren't any places for "woes" in that list!

Be who you are ...they seemed to be saying to us, "these times demand this of you."

I keep going back to the words the Spirit placed in our hearts as we listened deeply to our call as IHM women religious at our Chapter:

“Each of our stories writes the narrative of IHM,  
unfolding again and again the charism,  
especially in spaces longing for liberation.

“unfolding ... in spaces longing for liberation.

No room for hypocrisy there.

Then we have the Saint of the day:

There’s a lot of the story of Augustine along with his mother, Monica who we celebrated yesterday that we could unpack as well – the incredible conversion of mind and heart that moved him to become a person of integrity and holiness.

There may be aspects of his theology that we may question – he was a man of his times ..

But as I think about a place to be anchored in these times – as I experience the unfolding – and the call to those spaces needing liberation – some of the words that rise to the surface when I looked for quotes from Augustine reminded me of core of it all:

- God loves each of us as if there were only one of us
- You have created us for yourself and our heart is not quiet until it rests in you.
- Pray as though everything depended on God. Work as though everything depended on you.
- Charity is no substitute for justice withheld.
- To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek Him is the greatest adventure; to find Him, the greatest human achievement.

So, for me, it that seems to be the core of the call -- to continue to fall in love with Holy Mystery – Divine Love – who already loves us as we are – who calls us to be just who we are – in this place – in this time – during this unfolding – nothing more.