

Homily for the 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 14-15, 2020

Readings: Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31; 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-6; Matthew 25: 14-30

Preacher: Sister Karen Dietz

Sue Monk Kidd, in her book *Dance of the Dissident Daughter* asks the question: "After you wake up, can you wake up anymore?" I thought of that quote as I prayed with St. Paul's message to the Thessalonians both last week and this one. "Stay alert and sober," he admonishes.

I don't know about you, but too many days during this time of COVID-19 and the build up to the elections, I have wanted to do just the opposite, pull the covers over my head and go back to sleep. And yet sleep has often been illusive as I have tossed and turned, imagined and feared, hoped and dreaded. So what might Paul be saying to me in this time and place of November 2020? What is the call?

I turn to the Gospel for today. It is the familiar story of the distribution of talents and the servants who use and multiply their talents and the servant, who, out of fear of retribution, buries the talents he has been given so that they might be kept safe. In Jesus' day, a "talent" was literally a treasure, usually of a precious metal such as gold or silver. In our parlance, a "talent" is a gift we have been given by God; a gift that is an attribute or personality trait or aptitude. As we mature, we usually develop these talents and they shape decisions we make and the way we move in society and relate to family, friends and others.

Again, what am I being called to do or who am I being called to be at this time in history? In religious life circles, with diminishing numbers and aging populations, a question that is often raised for our reflection is, "what is ours to do?" As I pray with these readings, this really is the question.

Many of us were anxious for this election; we wanted it to be over and we wanted our candidate to prevail. No matter whose side you were on, I suspect both these realities hold true. So now it is over (or mostly over!). I have heard people breathe a sigh of relief that we can stop seeing such terrible ads on TV and the Internet and stop hearing all the political rhetoric and return to our daily living.

Now that the decision is made, I have heard some say that it is now up to the winning candidates to get to work and gosh, they have a lot of work to do.

I think the same thing happens in our life of faith. Jesus lived, suffered, died and rose from the dead and now look at all the work there is to do in our world. There are so many challenges, sufferings and injustices and it is time for the Spirit to get to work. We pray for God's intercession when what we are really praying for is God's intervention. Please do not misunderstand. I believe God moves in and among us all the time and we must pray not for God, but for ourselves. God does intervene in God's time and in God's way.

However, this does not mean it is all up to God. Nor does it mean that the healing and changes needed in our city, county, state and world are all up to the elected leaders. And the changes necessary in our interpersonal relationships are not all up to the other party. No, it is up to us all. It is time for each of us to ask the question: "What is mine to do?"

First of all, I believe we need to stay awake or wake up more fully to the realities in our world. As we look around us and the circles in which we move, we look with open eyes, hearts, ears and arms. What do we see, hear and feel? As we look, we need to keep breathing deeply, mindful of God's abundant love for all creation. Remember that phrase from Thessalonians, "you are children of the light and of the day." This anchor will keep us from being overwhelmed by the darkness we perceive. This will also allow us to grasp those areas of light and of darkness. It will help us to not want to pull the covers over our heads and go back to sleep.

As we take in the realities of our world in a new way, we ask ourselves the question "what is mine to do." We know our talents (and if you are unclear, ask God to show you yours and you will know). How can we take these and use them for the sake of the common good? For me, this is the most important question of our time. Of course, it is only important if we also then have a commitment to be faithful servants and use these talents rather than saving them for another day. This is a new day and there is much work to be done. Let's get to work!