

2020 Advent Reflection

December 13, 2020

Reflection by Sister Francene Evans

Third Sunday of Advent

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God. (Isaiah 61:1-2A)

One of today's scripture passages is from Isaiah and the Gospel is about John the Baptist. I prayed with both and asked them to "speak" to me, to tell me who they are and to be a guide for my life. Both seem convinced that God has chosen them for very special tasks. Isaiah clearly names *who he is*: one sent to work for justice and the healing for those considered least.

John the Baptist begins with *who he isn't*. No, I'm not the Prophet, not Elijah, nor am I the Christ "whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." John says he is only a voice out in a desert place trying to prepare the way for a greater one whom he believes will be coming. In camel's hair clothing he stands by the river each day, calling for repentance, baptizing those committed to changing their lives, telling tax collectors and soldiers they must treat people justly, and endangering his life by denouncing Herod for his illicit marriage.

A quick reading of Isaiah and John gives the impression that they were firmly convinced as to what God was asking them; that unlike us, they didn't have to study their situation, gather the facts, ask the opinions of people they trusted, then pray about it, gather their courage and take first steps. But being human like us, of course they did. Did they ever have to step back, reconsider, experience failure, and change their course? Yes, of course they did.

As I write this, the US is divided politically, many are suffering economically, the number of people sick and dying from the pandemic each day is increasing, and socially distancing from others, while the safest path, is keeping us apart for those we love. The needs are high; what might God be calling me/us to do? How are we to "prepare the way of the Lord"?

At times I dream of doing something really great to make a difference. When I'm more realistic I remember some ideas that have guided me before. "Bloom where you are planted." "Be the change you wish to see in the world." "Know that all the choices you make each day can help create the world you desire." Yes, it is by loving and serving where I am that in some small way I help heal our world.

You may be familiar with Mychal Judge, a Franciscan priest in New York City who ministered to the homeless and hungry, people with AIDS, and those at the margins of society. He is best

known as the chaplain to the New York Fire Department who became the first certified fatality in the Twin Towers on 9-11-2001. He was also a recovering alcoholic, sober twenty-some years, who owned his powerlessness and his utter dependence on God. He had a prayer that he said twice daily to guide his decisions. I value the wisdom in that prayer and share it with you.

***Lord, take me where You want me to go,
Let me meet who You want me to meet,
Tell me what You want me to say,
And keep me out of Your way.***