

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

The Most Holy Trinity | For Sunday, May 30, 2021

Worship and Doubt

Written by Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

Deuteronomy 4:32-34, 39-40

Romans 8:14-17

Matthew 28:16-20



“When they all saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted.”

I have always worshipped. Postures of prayer and praise have been woven into the fabric of my daily life for as long as I can remember. Going to Mass on Sunday, saying a prayer before I eat, kissing a Rosary when it falls to the ground, murmuring a Hail Mary before I fall asleep at the end of the day: these are actions that have become so much a part of me that they are now almost involuntary.

But doubt — well, I know all about that, too. Don't we all?

My most intense period of doubt and spiritual darkness was brought on by witnessing my mother's battle with cancer. As years of affliction dragged on for her, I saw her continue to worship without ceasing, even when she could no longer physically kneel. Worship was a consolation for her, and I couldn't understand it. She couldn't stop herself from going to God — praising, beseeching, exalting, invoking. She had done it in joy and in good fortune, and she did it now even more zealously in anguish.

At the time, I was, as today's second reading says, “enslaved” by fear, in particular a fear of earthly suffering. And as my mother kept praying and kept getting sicker, I became completely disgusted: disgusted not just with God for His faithlessness, but with my mother for her refusal to abandon Him.

During this time, I wanted to stop worshipping. But when I tried, I felt a little like a child holding my breath to spite an authority figure. Staying home from Mass didn't make me feel free. Refusing to pray didn't give me any satisfaction. Worshipping in the midst of doubt felt confusing, but not worshipping at all felt like suffocation — like complete immobility.

I didn't realize at the time that I was only operating with half the story. I was, for all intents and purposes, only reading the Old Testament.

Today we hear in Deuteronomy Moses begging his people to keep worshipping, that they may "have long life on the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you forever." But so many of the Israelites never saw the Promised Land in their lifetime on earth. All that many of them saw was bitter disappointment.

To look at the situation on the face of it, through eyes enslaved by fear, it would seem that God had not kept His promises.

But the story is made complete by the verse from Romans, "and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if only we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."

I found this verse during my period of spiritual darkness, and though it would take me some years to fully understand it, I knew that in these 28 words God was telling me that I had a misunderstanding of my own inheritance, and of my mother's inheritance — the one she so steadfastly refused to renounce even as her prayers seemingly went ignored.

I thought my inheritance could be bought by worship, when in reality, it is a gift freely given.

Worship is a relationship, not a transaction. When Jesus instructed his followers to make disciples of all nations, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you," he knew that sometimes they would have to rely on the muscle memory of worship, just as I did, when the Promised Land seemed particularly far away.

Our inheritance is not a body free of pain or a land of milk and honey. Here on earth, our inheritance looks like a heavy cross on weak shoulders, and it feels like the scratching of rough wood on exposed skin.

But in Heaven, it looks like an empty tomb, and feels like a wound that has long since ceased to burn.

Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

PRAYER

Lord, give me steadfastness of spirit,
That I may worship even in moments of doubt
That I may embrace my inheritance
That I may rejoice in my spiritual adoption
That I may keep His commandments
And enjoy long life on the land He gives me
forever.