

RENEW LENT - HOLY SATURDAY

MARCH 30, 2024

Mission and Discipleship, What Comes Next?

By Melissa Gurash

This night, we will enter our church in a different way. We have spent the time between Good Friday and Holy Saturday praying over the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. Throughout these last 40 days, we have been with Jesus in the desert, reflecting on Jesus's sacrifice for us and what that means for us personally. We have let go of things that were inhibiting our time with Jesus, even things that are not inherently bad but things that have kept us from spending time with Him. We gave up treats and other things that we liked- the donut with our morning coffee - as a sign that we were in a different penitential space. This preparation has been for this moment, for this night, for what comes next. So, as we end our Lenten fast, what does that mean for us? What do we do next?

Tonight, Jesus has risen from the dead, and, in one sense, his mission on the earth has ended. It is ended, but not over; it now falls to us. We are his disciples; we are the hands and feet of Jesus. Will we continue to do his good work on earth: feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, and caring for the sick?

This year will mark my 27th anniversary of coming into the Catholic Church. It was at the Easter Vigil 1997 that Eric and I were confirmed and completed our initiation. As such, the Easter Vigil has always held a special place in my heart. On this night, people across the world will be welcomed into the faith through baptism and confirmation. They, too, will be accepting a new mission as disciples of Christ.

I was baptized as an infant, but I did not grow up attending church. Looking back, I can always feel God was close to me, and I'm sure he 'knocked' at my door often. When I was baptized, I was named for Christ, and even though I didn't attend church, I knew I was Catholic, and it always meant something to me. I spent the first 27 years of my life apart from God and not living out my full discipleship call. This doesn't mean I wasn't living my life as a good person, but it was through my confirmation and being sealed in the spirit that I began to live my life differently; I began living my life with a disciple's heart. I began to feel the need to answer Jesus' call and ask what I could do to make the world a better place.



Being a disciple, being Jesus' hands and feet on earth, means taking an active role in our faith, answering the cries of the poor, taking care of the elderly, the sick, and those forgotten on the margins in need of care and support. We are called to look at the world differently, to notice the beggars in the street, and not just turn our heads and pretend we didn't see them. As Jesus says, *"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."* Matthew 25:40.

One of the first ideas I had as a newly confirmed Catholic was how I could use my crocheting hobby to help others. The idea never came to fruition, but over the years, this idea kept coming to me, and eventually, I switched from crocheting to being an avid knitter. I continued feeling a nudge from the Holy Spirit, an idea that I could do something with this. I eventually met with our parish pastoral care worker, and we created a prayer-shawl ministry. I had no idea what this would mean to those receiving the shawls, but I knit prayerfully and waited.

The immediate feedback I received after we began to gift completed shawls was surprising: "I felt like God was giving me a hug," and "I felt so much peace when the shawl was placed upon my shoulders." It was a powerful experience of letting Jesus use my hands to help his people. This is just one small way that I have been able to live out my discipleship call.

Today, I'm pleased to say that this prayer shawl ministry is alive and flourishing. My part of it has ended, but the work continues. Over these past few years, I have learned that there is always a new call. God continues to call us, and we need to stay alert and keep our hearts turned toward Jesus so that we can hear the way the Holy Spirit is calling us in our lives. I prayerfully ask you to reflect on some of the questions below about ways that you can live out your discipleship heart.

For Your Reflection:

- How can you participate in various ministries and activities within your faith community to deepen your connection to God and fellow believers?
- Where can you seek opportunities to serve those in need, demonstrating love and compassion through acts of kindness and support?
- How can you use your unique talents and hobbies to bless others and positively impact their lives, following the example of Christ's love in action?
- How can you cultivate a habit of prayer and reflection, remaining open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and discerning God's will in your life?

Suscipe Prayer

*Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours; do with it what you
will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.
-St. Ignatius of Loyola*