

Something Incredible is about to Happen

The current covid 19 pandemic has made us all painfully aware of the terrifying elements of nature we don't fully understand. There are, however, elements of nature we don't fully understand that are full of hope! Such is the case in the scientific phenomenon in the genesis of the butterfly known as "imaginal cells."

Researchers have no idea where these cells come from, or why they appear. They are termed 'imaginals' because scientists can only hypothesize their purpose. That hypothesis is that they literally reach a critical mass of influence where the caterpillar's destiny is altered to become a butterfly.

The basic characteristic of imaginal cells, then, is to 'imagine' that something incredible is about to happen." This is the impression I get from the Scriptures proclaimed today, and especially the powerful Gospel story of the Samaritan woman at the well. In the bleakest moments of human history or the lowest point in our personal stories, there is HOPE: a miraculous, mysterious promise. There is something incredible about to happen.

For the Israelites in the desert, it is the miracle of water from the Mount called "Horeb," which literally means "dry" or "desolate." The thirst they—we—experience is exacerbated by their lack of faith in God, who has already shown a covenant love by rescuing them from slavery. Human history is riddled with similar examples of a lack of trust in God.

Tragedies of either natural or human origin are rarely met with an understanding of the movement of the divine in our world. Like the Israelites, our resistance is evidenced by our need to always to be control. We put more trust in ourselves than in God's enduring love. Their piercing question is often our own: "Is the LORD in our midst or not?" Yet in the midst of their story and ours, "there is something incredible about to happen."

The Samaritan woman, however, draws out the most profound meaning for our continuing Lenten celebration. We are that woman. She—like us—is thirsting. She comes to the well looking for physical refreshment and instead is offered "living water" which will forever satisfy her thirst. She is a sinner and amazed that her sin would be so obvious to a stranger; she is not able to hide behind appearances. She is alienated. As a Samaritan and as a woman, she lacks standing among her own people and in the wider community. Though obviously emboldened by the exchange with Jesus, on the surface she is hardly to be considered a trailblazer. Yet the experience at the well transforms her. What would seem remarkably unlikely becomes a reality. How did that happen!? Indeed, "there was something incredible going on there."

So...Israelites unabashedly unfaithful are nonetheless miraculously rewarded. A Samaritan, a woman, a sinner is not only offered eternal life but is also the first to receive the challenge to proclaim the Good News! As we hear and identify with these stories, St. Paul reminds us that it is all gift. The promise made at our baptism is irrevocable and unconditional. So that even as we wander, thirsting through our own personal and societal deserts, God is there. Even in our sinfulness, our weakest human moments, eternal life through living water is freely offered, as well as the challenge to proclaim the goodness of an ever-present, ever-loving God.

In a marvelous way then, these Scriptures and our response to them resemble the phenomenon of the imaginal cells. For people of faith this phenomenon has a source in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul reminds us:

*...because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

It is the very movement of the Holy Spirit that relentlessly calls us to a change of heart, a transformation. That Spirit, like the imaginal cells, repels resistance and bolsters the progress of good within us.

In spite of the tragedies we experience, especially those of our own making, there is reason for hope. We recognize on our Lenten journey that there is something in us and in the world that will ultimately transform us, living waters that will challenge us to proclaim the Good News. As we embrace the Word proclaimed today, as we celebrate the Sacrament of Christ's presence in this Eucharistic and in one another, we accept the reality of the transforming power of the Spirit because truly, something incredible is about to happen!

SABBATH REFLECTIONS FOR THE WEEK

Where is your story in the Sacred Story today?

Where is the desert in your life? Describe it in some detail as the place your thirst would lead you to question the goodness of God. In that place, where is hope?

How do the Scriptures proclaimed today and your response to them resemble the phenomenon of the imaginal cells?

*The image of the **imaginal cells** can be applied to all sorts of situations in our personal lives and in the lives of systemic organisms like businesses, communities, the church, even the world. What can that image offer any of these?*