

Reflection 4.3.2020 Cate P. Orive, OP

First Reading. From the Book of Revelation 12:1-17, *The Sign of the Woman*.

Preamble:

As members of the Order of Preachers, we are truth bearers; this is, we **bring** or **carry**, the word of God, Christ and the Gospel, to the world. We bring the Good News to people then sit and engage with them in a conversation to **facilitate** their interaction with the Gospel truth, of which we are simple porters. We facilitate this interaction so that they can grow and move towards the Truth; not **our** truth, and not **our interpretation** of truth, but rather **the Truth**. We share our thoughts and enter into sacred conversation around **the Truth** we bear (carry) which means we enter into that place “where two or more are gathered in my name, there shall I be” ( ).

All of this as a preamble to say that I am not a Johanian scholar and truthfully, I have no idea what he was trying to say in this passage. Luckily for me I don't need to; I don't need to know, or be right. What I can do is find the metaphors and interact with them through symbolism. SO I can share with you my own interpretation and then invite you to do the same.

Humor.

I believe humor is a gift we can use to open conversation through a joyful and relaxed moment. Context of course is everything so many times humor is not appropriate, but good humor I have found is not irreverent but pragmatic. And I am always down to joke about angels. They are divine messengers who always bring messages which will upend our lives as we know them. So bear with me as I contemplate from a humoristic, or tragic, perspective the message I hear in this Reading:

A brief retelling of the story:

An important woman gives birth to a baby who is taken to God and she runs away into the desert, alone. Michael and his legions go to war and defeat the enemy which had besieged him and his brethren in heaven. Yay! Victory for the angelic host! A divine voice calls out now and announces that the war has now been sent to earth. So Michael is enjoying a vacay while all earth is now under siege. Perhaps he came to someone on earth to give them a message...maybe it went like this:

A person sees an angel approaching. They stop their work and rub their eyes...the angel approaches.

Michael: “Hey! I bring you news from heaven!”

Human: A little incredulous. “Um. Okay?”

Michael: “I bring good news and bad news. Which do you want first?”

Human: Pauses. “Um...The good news?”

Michael: “Good choice! We vanquished the enemy in heaven! He is defeated!” Raises his sword exultant.

Human: Leaps back. Looks around. “Good for you? And how is that good news for me exactly?”

Michael: "Well, it's not really. And that's the bad news. The enemy was sent here since he was cast out of heaven. So good luck with that! We will be watching! Bye now". Michael disappears before the human can protest..."You did whaaat? And he was sent where?????" His words lost in the dust storm left by Michael's hasty departure. The Human, aghast, swears never to talk to angels again and promises to go check the food for mushrooms.

Post reflection.

In this passage not all is lost. There is, however, a point of help, which is the earth itself, which opens to swallow the flood which the serpent had sent to carry the special woman with the eagle wings away. So the serpent is at least momentarily halted and waits by the shore, because the earth responded to help the woman. This imagery brings to mind the very essence of our faith which points to the TRINITY itself. Why? Because God came to Earth and became FLESH...of the earth. Of us. This as Dominicans is central to our engagement with the heresies. All of which tried to argue the separation of God and Earth, of Heaven as Good and Creation as evil, or that God is divine and sent a representative which was Jesus but not divine. St. Athanasius took on a lot of persecution both from within the Church and from without to remind people of the **divinity of the Trinity** which meant GOD WITH US in His human form as Jesus Christ. So returning to our passage, earth, creation itself, which is **of** God, responds to the needs of the woman, as she is mother to a Child with God, and moves to protect her. This to me indicates that Creation moves towards eternal life in God. Which means there is will in Creation, which also is a metaphor for our own unique nature as children of God, imbued by Him with free will. We must MOVE TOWARDS GOD, in response to a calling and a need, but of our own VOLITION. Thus we become agents of the Lord on this Earth, which is His garden. We work with life on earth (creation), towards life eternal (God), and thus enter the "battle" ourselves. While Michael and his hosts of course, watch from the sidelines...

...Well, all I can say is "Michael, I hope you enjoy the show, because it is going to be a good one. St. Catherine knew it too. So enjoy the popcorn, and the fireworks. Oh...and when this is over...you and me, we are going to have a conversation....on just how to bring tidings from heaven. Cause dude, You need some upskilling."