



Lent reflection for March 18, 2024

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Mark 9:14-29

When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them and some scribes arguing with them. When the whole crowd saw him, they were immediately overcome with awe, and they ran forward to greet him. He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak, and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid, and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so." He answered them, "You faithless generation, how much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, help us! Have compassion on us!" Jesus said to him, "If you are able! All things can be done for the one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!" When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!" After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand. When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" He said to them, "This kind can come out only through prayer."

Today's Reflection is by Elisabetta Coletti

I have been searching for home for as long as I have memory. For a stillness. A silence echoing that where I am is enough, that even when I fall to torment in my heart and deny the magnitude of God, God is there. I admit that I struggle with belief. Real belief. Beyond the church-going, communion-receiving,

coffee-mingling of parish life. I feel ashamed often that I am a fraud, sometimes only able to feel God when I gaze at a painting by Caravaggio or inhale the magic of a Bach cantata. God of high church. I was raised Mormon, with liturgical and aesthetic paucity, perpetually feeling “other” and out of place, without a spiritual home.

The enormity of Christ’s question, “What were you arguing about along the way?” seems an invitation to me to be still and allow God to surround me, to truly be at home, and stop flagellating myself for not getting it. Stop arguing and be still.

Like many mothers of young children, I find myself disoriented and disconnected from the self I once knew. The foreign correspondent, musician, gardener, traveling INTERESTING me has been eclipsed by soccer practice, Mommy and Me sing-alongs, angling for this school over that, this teacher over that, chess, piano lessons, all of it. And often, none of it for me. I feel like I have subcontracted even my spirituality to that of my boy. He really believes. But if I am still and not bemoaning me and where I have disappeared, I know that God has welcomed me back with this child. I have never felt home like this. The scientist and feminist in me is ashamed at times to admit the overwhelming joy and presence of God I feel as a mother. “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.” God is here. The critic shaming me says it is vain and selfish to magnify my individual motherhood when there are parents struggling to feed their children- migrants, mothers in Gaza- but this is where I, just me, find my home. And where I can teach my child to be home for others: the sick, the poor, the depressed and bullied. I came to Holy Apostles through Luca. It was meant to be temporary or on-the-side, an easy filler at Christmas time, attending this little service called “This Little Light.” Since then, our family has been welcomed with toddlers singing “Our Father,” kneeling with their chubby legs at the tiny altar, listening to the stories of Perpetua the puppet, and transitioning to Sunday School and after-school religious education. I have found a home, a stillness, by feeling included. Feeling “whoever welcome me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”



Elisabetta has lived in Windsor Terrace with many pets (including the messiest pet of all, a baby) since 2001. She moved to New York City for what was supposed to be a short stint at the AP before being re-deployed as a foreign correspondent. Fast forward 20 years and she is a veterinarian trying to remember how to do the things she loves like gardening, cooking and traveling. Home for her has also been Northern California, Oregon and Italy.