

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Dn 12:1-3 Heb 10:11-14,18 Mk 13:24-32

Sister Catherine Marie Bazar, O.P.

***“The wise shall shine brightly, like the splendor of the firmament.
Those who lead many to justice
shall be like the stars forever.” Dn 12:3***

Five minutes before her death, my mother rose from her bed and went into the bathroom to wash my dad’s socks, wring them out, and place them neatly across a towel to dry. She then walked painfully out, grabbed me, and shouted, “Take care of Daddy” before collapsing and dying in my arms.

When my dad came in and discovered us, I said to him, “Talk about washing one another’s feet! She loved you to her last act on earth.” This incident so touched him that, in spite of his grief, he lived for two more years smiling in the glow of her devotion, esteem, and unconditional love for him. This was an ending of a precious life on earth that my family cherishes to this day.

This period of the Church’s seasonal end gives us some grim Readings about the final days with warnings and portents that can often leave us overwhelmed and fearful. But the above quote from Daniel struck me as a small jewel placed in the midst of some serious reflections we are called upon to ponder. Who are the **“wise,”** and what is the justice lived by those who **“lead many”** to it?

We can certainly point to the high-drama justice acts of people like Bishop Romero, Martin Luther King, and Gandhi, acts that resulted in their ultimate martyrdom and worldwide esteem. But for the majority of us who seek in our personal, communal, or even silent ways to effect change and build a better world, it doesn’t take much to turn others into resurrection people. Herein lies the ultimate justice.

Rather than concern myself with a future judgment that I have no understanding of or interest in, I prefer to ponder the “today” invitations that call us to stretch ourselves beyond our present strengths and release new energies into the lives of others. How can I recognize that the pain or sorrow or worry of the very next person I encounter is also mine? I am always touched when I observe my inmates in jail, people with no power whatsoever, rising to meet critical occasions and reaching out to support someone in grief, someone who needs a stamp, someone who just arrived and is frightened, someone who is pregnant or wheelchair bound, someone who just got fifteen years to life. And on a rare occasion, there is even the deputy who brings in a good movie for her unit to watch, just to break the worry and tension and monotony of the long days. Are they effecting a type of resurrection in those they touch and also within the very core of their own beings? I say “yes” to that!

Barbara Fiand says, "***We contain the universe within our deepest selves and are . . . one with it***" (Prayer and the Quest for Healing, 123). If this is so, I am not only "one" with the good and blest and transforming journey of all creation as it urges itself towards its ultimate fulfillment, but I am also "one" with my immediate "today" encounters in whatever way they may present themselves to me. As mundane as it sounds, every mountain began with a speck of dust, every continent began with a grain of sand.

May we, like Daniel's wise ones, embrace each moment of our lives as an invitation to further this adventure by stretching one hand to the "***splendor of the firmament***" while the other washes the feet of a fellow traveler on the dusty road of daily encounters.