

Contemplative Musings

by Patricia Rome Robertson



The word contemplative originates from the Old French word contemplation, derived from the Latin contemplationem which means 'act of looking at,' from contemplari, meaning 'to gaze attentively, observe'. Originally it meant 'to mark out a space for observation' (as an augur would). In English, it meant 'religious musing.'

Perhaps you've noticed that we've moved into a New Year in the Church Calendar. Most noticeable is the change in what we call the Sunday Eucharistic lectionary – the assigned lessons to be read in church each Sunday. We have moved into the year which features readings from the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew is a faithful Jew writing to other Jews. His story of the birth of Jesus is strikingly different from our cherished version of Bethlehem from Luke. It begins with the genealogy of Jesus through primarily the male line and then continues with Joseph who is engaged to Mary who, as we know, becomes pregnant. Joseph has a dream in which an angel tells him not to abandon Mary but instead to marry her and care for her because of the special child that she carries. Joseph follows the dream which shapes the future events. In scripture and in our own lives, dreams can provide us with Divine direction.

Joseph had a dream. His dream did not foretell the future. It only gave him instructions for the present. He had no idea where his path with Mary would actually lead.

I had a dream. I was wrestling with how to serve Christ through the church. Jesus came to me in the dream and said “follow me”. I actually got out of bed and started down the stairs before I woke up. In that moment of waking, I saw his physical presence and was no longer afraid to say “yes” to the path of ordination to the priesthood. I had no idea where that would lead but I was ready to start.

Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream. It was one which put him on a path that eventually led to that famous speech on the Washington Mall and eventually his assassination. In articulating his dream he inspired a nation and a people to a higher purpose that we still struggle to live into today.

God has dream. It is a dream that is shared throughout Holy Scripture of a people whose primary purpose is one of love, joy, harmony and creativity.

Understanding and articulating our dreams requires time for reflection, prayer and silence. If we allow it, Advent provides us with a perfect time for our dreams to be heard and then followed.

You have a God-given dream planted in you. St. Barnabas has a dream. What is God's dream for St. Barnabas? What is the new thing that God is bringing forth in all of us? In you?

May we be open to receive it. And when we receive it may we open it and follow.

Advent Blessings abound in all of you,

Patricia+