

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Nov 21st 2015

Memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The readings today bring up several stirrings on my heart and in my daily life these days.

In the first reading from Revelation, John swallows this “sweet tasting” scroll; yet, it upsets his stomach, “turning it sour.” What imagery! I think we can all imagine the sensory experience that John is describing.

I offer us an opportunity to get a feel for this imagery through the lens of a two year old. With my toddler daughter who is often trying new foods and who has an ever-increasing vocabulary, we have been talking a lot about food and preferences lately. “Yummy in my tummy, Mama!” With a giant smile, she’ll often exclaim, “I LIKE it!” when she has one of her many favorite foods. “No like zucchini; no thank you Mama,” she’ll remind me regularly at the dinner table when zucchini’s on the menu. With Halloween in the not too distant past, I remember wondering if having several pieces of chocolate trick-or-treat treasures that night had anything to do with her claim that her “tummy hurts.”

I have found myself savoring the words of Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si*, especially the inspiring, practical and hopeful sections in Chapter 6. As I read the words in the text, let the words sit on my heart in reflection and engaged in conversations with others, I can taste, very clearly, the attractive sweet taste of these inspirational words from Pope Francis. My mouth tastes the sweetness of the call and my hearts leaps with enthusiasm: Solidarity with the poor and marginalized.... My role in helping to combat climate change.... Instituting personal and institutional changes to further align with my faith and values to care for our common home.... The call to see the Divine in literally every creature... The urge to not abuse my power as a citizen in a very developed country....

All of these inspirational words and desires draw me in as the Psalm says, “that God’s promises are on my palate.” “...Sweeter than honey to my mouth!” Like the people in the temple listening to Jesus’ word, I find myself “hanging on his words.”

And, yet, these words that call me to really, radically live out my values – the Divine Law, the Gospel, the words of *Laudato Si* - are not as easy to swallow. A times, they sit in my stomach and make me uncomfortable, a little sick to my stomach when I really digest them. The action that our faith demands is tough and radical. The day-in and day-out decisions of discernment to follow Christ in a consumer-driven throwaway society, to change our lifestyle habits to reduce our use of resources, to be in more regular and authentic relationships with the marginalized are difficult and unsettling. They call me out of my comfort zone, my lifestyle habits, to desire to keep harmony and my inclination to not ruffle anyone’s feathers.

And yet, even with the challenge that God’s words and Pope Francis’ words present to me these days, I am reminded that it is a goal worth pursuing, truly “more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces.” I invite each of us to continue to savor God’s words and persevere despite the challenges of a “sour stomach” in trying to live out our faith.

