

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Feb 16th 2013

Religion has rhythms. Crawling out of bed, we pause to pray. Meals begin with a blessing. Some days we fast. Recalling the saints brings cheer: we are not alone. During long drives, we turn off the radio and recite the rosary. On Sundays we celebrate Mass and sometimes leave Church humming hymns. Rituals welcome the young, anoint the sick, heal heavy hearts, and bid farewell to the dead. Catholics learn to read the Bible and a thinking faith is encouraged. Before sinking into sleep, we dart through the dying day for glimpses of God's face.

Sometimes the rhythm is dull like a tired drum beat. Sometimes rituals are haunting in new ways. But religion goes further. It pushes us out into the world. Hearing stories of war, violence, and injustice, our complacency is shaken. The theologian Dorothy Soelle calls religion the cure for banality. From the pews, we are called into the streets to speak out. Through faith we are connected to all things.

Today's readings reveal the cure for the gloom that settles upon us: watch your words, be mindful of the Sabbath, do not divide people, share food with the hungry, and take no delight in the misfortunes of the wicked. Give sinners a chance and partner with God in renewing this earth. Life is too short to rage against demons and bad guys.

Ritual can grow stale; authority can stifle the spirit. But the split between spirituality and religion is overdrawn. Faith must be lived through steps taken each day. From religion, we draw strength from all who search for God and struggle to make sense out of this earth and beyond. Their journeys show me who I am.

What becomes ordinary does not dim the beauty of being here. Like Levi, we can hear a new call and say Yes.

Jeanne Schule