

# Event 2006

## Event Scripture Readings

Isaiah 55: 10-11

For just as from the heavens  
    the rain and the snow come down  
And do not return there  
    till they have watered the Earth  
    making it fertile and fruitful,  
Giving seed to the one who sows  
    and bread to the one who eats,  
So shall my Word be  
    that goes forth from my mouth;  
She shall not return to me void,  
    but shall do my will  
    achieving the end for which I sent her.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh – a messenger of Satan to beat me – to keep me from exalting myself! Three times I begged God that it might leave me. And God said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Therefore I am content with weakness, with mistreatment, with distress, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ; when I am powerless, it is then that I am strong.

Mark 6: 1-6

Jesus came into his home town, followed by his disciples. When the Sabbath had come, Jesus had begun to teach in the synagogue, and the many listeners were astonished and said, “Where did he get all this? What is this wisdom that he has been granted, and these miracles that are performed by his hands? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses, and Judas and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us? They found these things to be stumbling blocks.

Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their home town and among their relatives and in their own household.” And he could work no miracles there, apart from laying his hands upon a few sick people and healing them; their lack of faith astounded him. Jesus made the rounds of the neighboring villages instead, and spent time teaching.

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## Homily

July 9, 2006

*Kathleen McCluskey, CSJ*

What's strange about today's liturgical context is that it claims we are in ordinary time. We are in anything but ordinary time. First, because we are gathered here in an extraordinary assembly, with an extraordinary group of women and men who are united at a very deep level. Look around and you will see neighbors committed to incarnating the God whose love is all-embracing, endlessly poured out, and permeating all that is. Look around you and you will see neighbors attentive to God's dreams for this little design and for the whole of creation; neighbors zealous for the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed, a kingdom in which right relationships yield peace and well being for Earth and all her creatures; neighbors whose relationships with others are characterized by the cordial love of Joseph. Our very being together makes this anything but ordinary time!

But it is not only because we are gathered in assembly that we recognize the extraordinary nature of this time; it is also because we live on the brink of the most extraordinary shifts and graces, a precipice of sorts that resonates with our charism perhaps more strongly than human beings have ever known before. We live in a time when we are learning all over again what it means to be human, to be one, to be beloved. We are recovering the memory of our essential oneness with all that is and discovering anew what it means to be a part of an ever widening communion. The deeper relations we are developing with one another and with Sisters of Saint Joseph all over the world are a sign of our participation in this new human consciousness.

The Word has gone forth and will not return void. The Word beats in our hearts, saying: All is One. ALL is One.

An African word beats in our hearts: *ubuntu*, which roughly translates: "a person depends on other people to be a human" or "I am because we are." *ubuntu ... ubuntu*

Hafiz says:

“Only a Perfect One  
Who is always  
Laughing at the word  
*Two*

Can make you know

Of

Love

We are sisters and associates of the neighborhood of the universe and our mystic hearts grasp that truth. But we live in a world troubled by division and violence, competition and fear of one another. This is the condition of our house: that we live in this paradox of the One and not yet One. This is the source of our distress and our hope. How will we live in this space?

Our little design was articulated by small simple communities of women with Medaille as a gentle guide. They knew nothing of the times we live in, but their wisdom guides us still. The memory of our founding tells us that we must live out this extraordinary awareness of the unity of all as sisters and associates of

the neighborhoods and in human time, just as Jesus did.

I know you. I know that each day, each one of you is Eucharist to the people to whom you minister. You bring healing and knowledge, peace, understanding, consolation, and compassion to those in need. You stand with the oppressed and work to change structures that keep people poor and disempowered. You speak out against war and violence of every kind; you join with others across the world to help eradicate poverty and hunger and to protect Earth. You do this in many, many neighborhoods around the world. And all the time, you are preaching with your hands and eyes and ears and voices that all is One. All the time, your hearts are yearning for everyone to experience themselves as beloved of God and connected with the whole of creation.

We know that the work of active inclusive love must be done **in** the neighborhoods, because in earthly time, oneness happens one relationship at a time, one connection at a time, one loving embrace of the other at a time.

But here's the secret of this moment in time: the circle of our embrace must become larger. Our desire to see as God sees has us looking at the whole of creation as our neighborhood. Our reflection on loving the neighbor without distinction has us identifying new dear neighbors: people on the margins, those whose languages and cultures are foreign to us, those who are poor and without power, the four legged, Earth herself. Our sense of mission is stretching to meet the scope of our consciousness.

This is the stuff of our mission today as Sisters of Saint Joseph and associates and friends. It demands largeness from us. It is as it has always been, the work of unifying love, but it bears a new face.

Today's gospel shows us Jesus right smack in the middle of his local neighborhood and his human family; what our tradition calls the Created Trinity. The dear neighbors are befuddled. They see his face and find him at once familiar and very strange. Mystery cloaked in ordinariness becomes a stumbling block. Is not this the carpenter, Mary's son? Aren't these his sisters and brothers? Yes, he is, and yes they are. And yes, he incarnates the One God and holds in his being the oneness of the universe. Jesus arrives in his home place, the local neighborhood where, if anywhere, people should know the state of his heart, and finds they want to keep him small. They cannot let him be more than they can hold. Because of this, relationships falter and fail and the very power of God, dependent on the mutuality, is affected. The exchange of energy we call grace is blocked.

What is the face of Jesus we see today? If it looks too ordinary or too mysterious, or too enemy-like, too challenging, or just too other, will we refuse it? Will our littleness, our need to keep people small, to keep our world small, to keep our God small, be the stumbling block, the thorn in our flesh?

In the reading from Corinthians, we hear Paul, too, stunned by "the surpassing *greatness* of the revelations," yet troubled by and fussing about that thorn in the flesh so familiar to all of us. He confesses that at times he hasn't been able to see beyond it, to see what new grace might be being offered through it. He tells us that he took it to prayer as best he could. And, behold, out of that suffering, he offers us a sustaining insight. In this very weakness, we are strong. This powerlessness is the very power of God.

So now, in a time when the experience of diminishment and limitation is our daily fare, our thorn in the flesh, and often a stumbling block, we too find ourselves paradoxically stretched. Just when we can't even manage our traditional circles of relationships and ministries, when the needs of people right near us are

so great, we discover that power for mission is to be found in much more expansive and complex relationships. God invites us to empty ourselves of any fear or hopelessness and to draw on the power of the risen Christ, Lord of the universe.

“When we pray, we move our feet.” says the African Proverb. Let us then ignite the spark our creative imagination!

As our neighborhood expands, how will the charism enter further upon the world stage? How will we learn to build our unity on the rich diversity of the people? In what yet unknown ways will we let the Spirit expand us and use us to release the power of the charism in the broken places of our small and fragile world? With whom shall we partner? How will we help others to know that our future depends on the future of every other being in the one sacred community? What does it mean **today** for us to be known as the Congregation of God’s **great** love?

No, this is no ordinary time. This is a crucial time in our story. We are diving deep together. We are reconceiving our identity, not only by going back to our roots, but by reading the signs of the times as we see them in our own local neighborhoods and in the neighborhood of the universe. We are looking anew at the God of our charism, and what we see is a huge and all encompassing Lover who gathers us, gives us everything he has, and sustains us in her loving care. This is the God we try to be for others, for our world, for the universe.

The Word has gone forth and will not return void: All is ONE; ALL is One. Will we soak it up as the earth does the rain? Will it, through us, provide seed for the sowers of justice and food for those who are hungry?

We inherit from our foremothers remarkable attention to God’s dreams, a zeal for everything that is of God, and the kind of love for the neighbor that jumpstarts the heart. In their times, they knew how to gather others up into God’s love. They knew how to turn love into action. Let us, in our time, on this threshold of history, be found faithful to this way of living.

I close with a poem.

Go, Gather Up the Love  
*Robert Priest*

Go, gather up the love  
I know now what we must do  
It is in your eyes and my eyes  
Go and gather it up, look by look,  
gaze by gaze,  
one flame in hand, one holy flame –  
two flames gathered up --  
Gather it through slum and hovel  
through mansion and factory  
with great gentleness, go  
taking a spark here a glow there  
turning none of it  
Gather it up and free it

if even in just your own lips  
through your own heart  
by being strong  
by going always beyond your limits  
Gather it to saturation  
long past your centre  
deeper than the full depth of you  
Gather it up in beads  
in blue flames, in fierce bonfires  
in blue flames, in fierce bonfires  
Let there be a leap of love  
in the centre of the earth  
a flame higher than the heavens  
a leap of our commitment  
of our will  
a leap of fire  
straight into the stars

*Smaller Than God: Words of Spiritual Longing*  
Edited by Br. Paul Quenon and John B. Lee  
Black Moss Press, Windsor, Ontario, CA, 2001

The Gift: Poems by Hafiz  
Trans. Daniel Ladinsky  
penguin Compass, NY, NY 1999

