

PREACHING: DSC Wednesday morning prayer
October 9, 2024

This past Sunday at Mass, I opened up our hymn book and found this bookmark. On one side it reads “Our Graced Journey: 1922-2022” Celebrated January 2, 2022. It was for the marking of our move out of our 100-year-old motherhouse, Marywood, which we were selling to be developed into affordable housing for seniors. Later this month the first of our new neighbors will be moving into what is now being called Academy Manor – the fruition of chaotic processes, filled with lots of questions, that was scary at times, and even now has us Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids living into *some* of the answers to the questions about our future.

On the other side of the bookmark is a quote from Teilhard de Chardin, which I think is rather timely:

Be gentle with yourself
for you are living through a major expression of your faith
and how to use it in the world.
You are rewriting decades of old beliefs
and shifting how you live your life.
This is no small feat.
It is ok to feel uncomfortable.
Great change often brings with it
discomfort and second guessing.
Do not shrink from this mission.
Not now.
You are changing
and your Divine Self is lighting the way.

We are changing and it is no small feat. Anne is right. We have more questions than answers right now. But this is nothing new. Haven’t we always had questions into which we lived the answers? In the decisions that need to be made, we hope to land somewhere, but like Teilhard says, such landing will bring discomfort and second guessing. But so does not looking at the question before us with integrity and courage.

Despite the questions and the seeming chaos of the moment (maybe because of it), I think we are invited this week, this moment, to consider that perhaps we are standing at a thin place. Celtic Spirituality says that the thin place is where the veil of the mystery of God is lifted for a moment, and we can see clearly for a moment. The thin place of this moment, this week, is seeing clearly the sacred mystery of what our God has done *in* us and *with* us in our past, what our God is doing *for* us and *through* us in our present, and what our God is already planning and preparing to do *within* us and *around* us in our future, for as God said to the people of Israel through Jeremiah and says to us, “I know well the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” These were words spoken to a people who were being carried

into exile, not out of exile and back to Jerusalem. They are words spoken to a people who no doubt had lots of questions in the midst of the chaos, who could hardly imagine a future let alone a future full of hope.

The questions before us might leave us feeling like we're on the way to exile, but the hope we have is that we have one another. We face the questions together. The Irish have a saying, *Ar scath a cheile a mharirimid*, (are scaw a kayla a var-i-meed), that is, we live in the shelter of one another. No matter the present and the future, no matter the questions and the answers, no matter the chaos and clarity, no matter the decisions one congregation or another makes for the future and sake of Dominican Life and Mission, we know this: embraced by our God, we live in the shelter of one another as a Sisters, as a Dominican Family, as the holy preaching for our times.

~ Megan McElroy, OP